

October 5, 2026
Frances Xavier Cabrini Day

A Pilgrim People, A Shared Home

A Christian Message on Migrants and Refugees for the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America

As Christian bishops and faith leaders serving communities throughout Colorado, we give thanks to God as the United States of America marks the 250th anniversary of its founding this year.

This anniversary invites us to remember not only the founding of our nation but also the generations who have helped bring its ideals to life. Our founding document, the Declaration of Independence, affirms that “all men are created equal” and “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.” This remains a treasured inheritance and a sacred responsibility. It does not differentiate between men; rather, it applies to all. In so doing, it calls us to recognize that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses an unconditional dignity that does not depend upon factors like birthplace, citizenship, wealth or social standing.

Many journeys have shaped America. We remember with respect the Indigenous peoples who inhabited this land long before the nation's founding, as well as those brought here through slavery and denied the freedom our nation proclaimed. We also give thanks for generations of immigrants and refugees who arrived carrying their faith, cultures, hopes and gifts.

Through the sacrifice, ingenuity and labor of many, newcomers have cultivated our land, built communities, strengthened churches, established businesses, advanced science, medicine and technology, defended the nation and cared for their neighbors. Here in Colorado, immigrants have worked in our mines and fields, taught in our schools, opened businesses, served in our hospitals, raised families and enriched our civic and religious life. They sought a place where their children could flourish and, across every field of endeavor, helped build up the home they found. Their stories remind us that America's immigrant heritage is an essential part of, and inseparable from, our national identity.

The story of our faith is also a story of journeys. Abraham left his homeland in response to God's call. The people of Israel knew exile and deliverance. The Holy Family fled danger and found refuge in a foreign land. Sacred Scripture repeatedly reveals a God who accompanies his people on the road, hears the cry of the vulnerable and commands us to welcome the stranger.

We, too, are a pilgrim people. Our earthly homes are not our final home. We journey together toward the Kingdom of God, dependent upon his mercy and entrusted to one another's care. When we remember our common pilgrimage, migrants and refugees cease to be distant categories. We recognize a mother or father, a son or daughter, a brother or sister walking the same road as us, toward our eternal home.

COLORADO CHRISTIAN LEADERS
A joint statement in the year of America's 250th anniversary

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit did not erase the languages and cultures of the peoples gathered in Jerusalem. Instead, the Spirit created communion among them. They remained many, but they were no longer strangers. This is the work of God: to gather without erasing, to unite without diminishing and to form one family from many peoples.

This vision offers hope for our nation as it enters its next 250 years. Our strength is found not in uniformity, but in unity around shared principles, responsibilities and concern for the common good. A nation secure in its identity can welcome the gifts of newcomers and invite them into a shared civic life. In this mutual exchange, strangers become neighbors and communities are renewed.

As Colorado observes Cabrini Day today, we remember Mother Frances Xavier Cabrini, a Catholic religious sister, missionary and immigrant who devoted her life to serving Christ in others. Beginning in 1902, she ministered among Italian immigrant families in Colorado, including those in the state's mining communities. She established Denver's Queen of Heaven Orphanage and later a summer home for its children near Golden.

Mother Cabrini did more than express concern for those who were suffering. She accompanied them and built places where they could be welcomed, cared for and allowed to flourish. Where others might have seen strangers or burdens, she saw the face of Christ. Her witness reminds us that Christian love draws near, accepts responsibility and becomes visible in service.

People continue to leave their homes in search of work, education, safety or opportunity; others flee war, religious persecution, violence or disaster. We pray for a world in which people can live in peace and provide for their families in the lands of their birth. When circumstances lead or compel them to migrate, they must never be reduced to problems, burdens or political symbols. They remain members of our one human family.

We affirm both a nation's responsibility to protect its people and maintain an orderly immigration system and its duty to treat every person with justice and mercy. Laws should serve the common good while respecting human dignity, protecting the vulnerable, preserving family unity and providing fair legal processes. Newcomers and receiving communities alike bear responsibilities toward the good of all. Justice and mercy, order and compassion, rights and responsibilities must be held together.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, our first question cannot be simply, "Who is required to act?" In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus calls us to become neighbors to those we encounter in need. He makes this command still more personal when he says, "I was a stranger, and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). In the stranger who stands before us, Christ himself asks to be received.

Our churches must model the communion we seek for our nation. They should be places where newcomers are received as brothers and sisters, families find accompaniment, and differences in

COLORADO CHRISTIAN LEADERS
A joint statement in the year of America's 250th anniversary

language and culture become gifts offered in service of the community. Before calling others to welcome the stranger, we must ask whether our own doors, ministries and hearts are open.

On this anniversary, we invite the faithful to remember the immigrant and refugee stories that have shaped their families and communities; to pray for those displaced from their homes; to support ministries that accompany newcomers; and to build friendships across differences of language, culture and nationality. In these acts, we bear witness that hospitality, solidarity and care for the vulnerable are demands of the Gospel and signs of God's Kingdom among us.

May we receive with gratitude the gifts of those who came before us, accept responsibility for one another today and prepare a worthy inheritance for those who will follow.

May God grant wisdom to those entrusted with public authority, protection to those who journey in danger, consolation to separated families and strength to communities receiving newcomers. May the Holy Spirit free us from fear, deepen our solidarity and make us instruments of communion.

And may the Lord continue to bless the United States of America, forming us into a people who act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with God and welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.

In solidarity,

Rev. Dr. Meghan Johnston Aelabouni
Bishop of the Rocky Mountain Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

His Emm. Alexander
Archbishop of the Eastern Orthodox Church
of America

Most Rev. Stephen J. Berg
Bishop of Pueblo Diocese

Rev. Dr. Dee Cooper
Lead Presbyter of the Presbyterian Church

Most Rev. James R. Golka
Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Denver

Very Rev. Kyle T. Ingels
Diocesan Administrator of the Diocese of
Colorado Springs

Rev. Kimberly Lucas
Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Colorado

Most Rev. Jorge H. Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Denver

Bishop Kristin Stoneking
Resident Bishop of the Mountain Sky
Conference of the United Methodist Church

Note: Signatories are listed in alphabetical order by surname.