



DIOCESE OF VENICE IN FLORIDA

Department of Communications

A Statement from Bishop Frank J. Dewane on Immigration Enforcement, July 3, 2025

As the new detention center becomes operational at Dade-Collier Airport, or “Alligator Alcatraz,” it seems necessary to take stock of recent developments in immigration enforcement and the need for further improvements to our wider immigration system.

Broad Support for Actions Against Criminals

In describing immigration enforcement initiatives, the Trump administration has stated its focus is on removing criminal aliens who endanger public safety. This concern is widely shared. There is no argument with this. However, the need for just immigration enforcement and the government’s obligation to carry it out must be undertaken in a way that is targeted, humane and proportional.

Growing Recognition of Contributions of Immigrants

There is also a growing recognition that many, indeed most immigrants, even those who are not lawfully present, are not dangerous but peaceful, law-abiding, and hardworking contributors to our communities and to our economy. President Trump has acknowledged this in his recent remarks establishing a farm pass for those working in the agriculture industry.

Concern for strategies and rhetoric failing to respond to the dignity of persons

It is alarming to see enforcement strategies which treat all unauthorized immigrants as dangerous criminals. Masked, heavily armed agents who fail to identify themselves in enforcement activities are surprising. So is an apparent lack of due process in deportation proceedings in recent months.

Along this line, much current rhetoric is obviously intentionally provocative. It is unbecoming of public officials and corrosive of the common good to speak of the deterrence value of “alligators and pythons” at the Collier-Dade facility. I do not speak so glibly in regard to convicted felons in Florida Department of Corrections facilities. Decency requires that we remember individuals being detained are fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters of distressed relatives. This dignity of every person always remains unchanged: it is the dignity of a creature willed and loved by God (Pope Leo XIV, 16 May 2025).

Regarding the Center and Conditions

Observers note that people will be held at the new center in temporary structures, in the heat of the Florida summer, crowded in confined spaces, far from medical facilities and possibly located in the path of hurricanes. I have every hope that for brief stays, the conditions will befit human dignity.



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Concern for pastoral needs of detainees and staff

As this and other planned facilities become operational, it should be ensured that chaplains and pastoral ministers will be able to serve those in custody, to their benefit and that of the staff.

Reiterating a call for reforms to U.S. immigration system and support for those involved

The bishops of the United States have long been advocates of reforms to our immigration system. Thoughtful observers of the challenges faced by our country cannot help but recognize that serious reforms are necessary to preserve safety and the integrity of our borders, as well as to accommodate needs for labor, family stability and the ability of those at risk of grave harm to migrate with due process. Enforcement should be proportional. We continue to propose reforms that will enhance our immigration system, respect human dignity and promote the common good. For more on the bishops' approach to immigration reforms, click [here](#).

I call on all people of goodwill to pray for our government officials, for those in immigration custody and their families, for those who work in enforcement, and for justice and prosperity across our nation.