

THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY



At the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis asked us to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees. In his message, he said, “*The second verb – protecting – may be understood as a series of steps intended to defend the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees, independent of their legal status.*”

In answer to the call of our faith, The Basilica of Saint Mary is considering becoming a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation.

1 What are the differences between a Sanctuary Congregation and a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation?

- A **Sanctuary Congregation** provides private space for individuals and/or families to reside in a place of worship for an undetermined amount of time, while the community of Sanctuary works on the Stay of Removal orders for each person. The Basilica of Saint Mary does not seek to become a sanctuary congregation.
- A **Sanctuary Supporting Congregation** is a place of worship that provides spiritual, moral and tangible physical support and resources to people regardless of their legal status or worthiness. A sanctuary supporting congregation helps people who live in fear of deportation prepare for their transition through relationships, skills, resources and assistance. The Basilica of Saint Mary does this work in the community already. We have been considering declaring this and joining the network of congregations that are sanctuary supporting congregations.

2 What steps has The Basilica taken to look into this designation of Sanctuary Supporting Congregation?

Over the past twelve months, information has been gathered from attorneys and from Pastors, like Fr. Dale Korogi at Church of the Ascension who have become a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation. The Parish Council and Finance Committee have discussed this possibility over the last several months. Fr. Bauer and other parish leaders have written about this idea in our parish newsletters. We held listening sessions with parishioners and sought input from members of the parish community. At the April 2018 Parish Council meeting, it was unanimously decided to make this declaration.

3 Why did The Basilica become a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation?

As Disciples of Christ we are called by our faith to help those in need. Pope Francis reminds us that “*Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age.* (Matthew 25:35-43)” A Sanctuary Supporting parish cares for those most at risk and those living in fear.

We have encountered those living at risk and in fear at our sister parish, Church of the Ascension in North Minneapolis. Many in their congregation have lived, worked and raised their families in the US for decades. Close to 50% of the Ascension parish identify a fear that they, or someone they love, could be impacted by the threat of deportation. Besides basic needs, we have learned that they need assistance from lawyers and from notary publics to prepare guardianship papers for their children. Much is needed to prepare for a possibility of

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deportation. Declaring our willingness to do this work allows The Basilica to develop deeper relationships and trust with The Ascension Church community.

In addition, The Basilica has already been doing the work expected of a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation. Our Liturgies, Sacramental programs, Caring Ministries and St. Vincent de Pau Ministries receive and respond to all people—regardless of their status. There is integrity in naming what we do as a faith community.

Finally, declaring our parish as a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation is grounded in our faith. It is a direct response to the call to compassion by Christ, articulated by Pope Francis. It seeks to place our faith above any considerations of politics or division.

4 Now that The Basilica is a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation, what will change?

In large part, nothing will change. We will continue our current work and outreach through our St. Vincent de Paul Ministry. Every day we provide prayer, emotional support and basic tangible and physical resources such as sandwiches, clothing, toiletries, shoes, bus cards, help with I.D. cards, assistance with transportation, and rental assistance. As we deepen our partnership with Church of the Ascension Church, we will support and partner with the Latino parish community. We will also continue our immigration advocacy work and our prayerful support particularly for those who are on the margins and in need.

Our declaration as a **Sanctuary Supporting Congregation** provides transparency to our work. It allows us to intentionally partner in a deeper way with people in need of support and other congregations doing this work.

5 Is it important to designate The Basilica as a Sanctuary Support Congregation?

As we've gathered information and looked into this designation, we believe it is important to intentionally declare the work we are doing. Any legal risk is minimized, as we intentionally respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters through the lens of our faith. In addition, declaring as a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation will enable us to actively engage in our ministry within a network of other congregations committed to this work. This declaration is a commitment to the most vulnerable among us and this is a way to live out our faith and discipleship.

6 What are the next steps as a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation?

As a Sanctuary Supporting Congregation, we will continue to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable through our St. Vincent de Paul ministries and community partnerships and advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. As a We will continue to do this work compassionately, humbly and graciously—serving the most in need in our community in partnership with our brothers and sisters though a broader coalition of congregations.