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## Why some parishes are offering IDs to undocumented Texans

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May 8, 2018

For undocumented immigrants in Texas, something as simple as a routine traffic stop could mean arrest and deportation.

Since an anti-sanctuary law was enacted this spring, Texas law enforcement officers are permitted to inquire about the immigration status of anyone they have detained, even during routine interactions, and must comply with federal guidelines to hold undocumented criminal suspects for possible deportation.



*Credit: Ryan Rodrick Beller/Shutterstock*

Despite promises that the law would not lead to racial profiling and unnecessary arrests, its passage has left many immigrants feeling uneasy in their communities.

Father Michael Forge, a Catholic priest in Farmers Branch, Texas, told Dallas News that since the anti-sanctuary law was passed, several of his undocumented parishioners have told him that they felt unsafe to going to church or taking their kids to school.

That's why Forge and several other local Catholic churches have begun issuing Church identification cards. Unlike state-issued identification, they do not have any legal significance, but they can provide officers with a name and address, assuaging for some card holders the fear of arrest during otherwise routine interactions.

Auxiliary Bishop Greg Kelly of Dallas, who helped launch the initiative with the group [Dallas Area Interfaith](#), said that the

identifications give immigrants a sense of safety, community and belonging.

"It was just a way of giving them status within the church," Kelly told CNA. "It was a way of saying you belong to us, you're a part of our parish family."

Applicants for the church ID cards are typically asked to provide some other form of identification, such as an expired driver's license or passport from their country of origin, or an affidavit certifying their identity.

Some parishes ask that immigrants show that they are active parish members for several months before applying, though that is not a requirement everywhere.

"You don't have to be Catholic for that matter," Forge told Dallas News. "We certainly want our immigrants, legal or otherwise, to have some sort of peace."

Kelly said the cards have been a way to offer some solidarity with and peace of mind to fellow Christians.

"They're our brothers and sisters but oftentimes they live in the shadows, they're subject to injustices, wage theft, people may hire them and not pay them," he said.

Police in the cities of Dallas, Carrollton and Farmers Branch have been told that they are allowed to accept the church cards as a form of identification. The church ID's includes a person's name, address and home parish. They can also be used to enroll in citizenship or language classes.

"So far people have said there's a sense of relief and joy that they have something that says that they belong to this parish," Kelly added.

"They recognize that it's not an official government ID, they know that, it's just a way of saying: 'we are acknowledged here.'"