

Parish IDs Bring Relief to Immigrant Community

The document, accepted by several local police forces, has proven its certitude for Dallas parishioners.

By Violeta Rocha

SPECIAL FOR DALLAS CATHOLIC MAGAZINE

DALLAS - This summer marks one year since the Diocese of Dallas detailed the requirements for parishioners who lack state identification documents for their immigration status, to obtain a card issued by the parish to which they belong.

According to information provided by the Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI), a total of 20 diocesan parishes are currently participating in the issuance of parish identification. Each parish is autonomous in setting the expiration period of the document, but not the requirements to obtain it. These are uniform throughout the Diocese of Dallas (see below).

Currently, the document is accepted by the police departments of Carrollton, Dallas, Farmers Branch and Mesquite, as a result of the concerted effort between DAI, the authorities and the Diocese of Dallas since November 2017.

IMMEDIATE HELP

Lily Rodriguez, secretary of the Church of San Felipe in Dallas said that until May they had handed out 400 IDs.

Rodriguez, 28, also serves in the Ministry of Family Pastoral for Adolescents and more than a year ago she trained as a DAI leader to help the community.

"It's beautiful to see whole families that leave happy with their identifications," she said. "Being able to process these identifications from the parish office represents an immediate tool that we can provide to the people."

In San Felipe and since last April, many parishioners have come to renew the identification, since its validity in this parish is one year.

This is the case of Mr. López who preferred to omit his first name and who has been a member of the Church of San Felipe for two years.

Originally from Mexico City and based in Dallas for three years. López went in May to renew his parochial identification.

"One feels a difference to have an identification that although it is not state issued, the police can be certain that the data is correct because it is endorsed by the diocese of the city," he said.

A little less than a year ago, López used the parochial identification in a speeding stop in the Denton municipality.

"I was with my family and at first I felt nervous when the policeman pointed me to the edge of the road," he said. "I was happy and grateful that the police accepted my identification. I feel at ease because the diocese and the authorities are collaborating to identify people who have a clean record and keep their information up to date. "

LIGHT FOR ALL

The parish of San Juan in Dallas has issued 600 IDs to date, including the one from Ernestina, who preferred to keep her surname in reserve.

Originally from Mexico and a resident of Dallas for two decades, the parishioner of SJD, showed her identification along with the Mexican consular registration, in a stop for speeding in Carrollton.

"The policeman saw the two identifications and when he returned from his patrol he told me: 'your record is clean and for today I will not give you an infraction. Have a good day, " she narrated.

The parish priest of San Juan Diego, Father Jesus Belmontes said that the parochial identification is "a relief for our community and expressed that it has been received in a very favorable way.

"Our people are the most vulnerable at the moment we live," he said. "The gesture of the police to accept parochial identification is a sign that they want to protect us rather than harm us. It is a light that is opening and little by little can enlighten us all."

Along with the issuance of parish IDs, DAI keeps the training of community leaders active.

In March, with the support of the Diocese of Dallas and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), it trained 250 parishioners from Dallas, predominantly Hispanic.

REQUIREMENTS TO OBTAIN A PARISH ID

- Have a minimum of 3 months active membership of the parish where the document is issued.
- Have an identification of the country of origin such as: passport (regardless of whether it has expired), license or consular registration.
- Provide a utility bill with the current residential address.
- Submit the birth certificate.
- Ask a person one knows sign an affidavit and have it notarized, stating that they know the applicant.

Source: Dallas Area Interfaith

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EDITION JUNE-JULY 2019