

Hundreds meet to discuss immigration, parish ID card

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2017



*Father Luis Gerardo asks a question of police officials, from left, David Hale, Farmers Branch chief of police; Derick Miller, assistant chief of police in Carrollton; and Gary Tittle, assistant chief of police in Dallas; at the Dallas Area Interfaith's discussion at Mary Immaculate Catholic Church in Farmers Branch on Nov. 5.
(RON HEFLIN/Special Contributor)*

By Violeta Rocha, Special to The Texas Catholic

FARMERS BRANCH—Representatives of various religious denominations and the chiefs of police of Dallas, Farmers Branch and Denton met with hundreds of people gathered at an event sponsored by Dallas Area Interfaith meeting that addressed immigration concerns, among other topics on Nov. 5.

The group of about 1,500 gathered at Mary Immaculate Catholic Church for a session that included topics involving immigration, under-reporting of crime

among Hispanics, accepting a parish/church ID as a valid form of identification, infrastructure issues and crime in various neighborhoods.

The chiefs of police in attendance said that a parish or church identification card could be accepted in their cities during routine traffic stops or in reporting of a crime in order to validate the identity of someone who may not have an official governmental identification.

“Having this ID can be the difference between paying a traffic ticket or being arrested for not having a form of identification,” said Father Michael Walsh, parochial vicar at Holy Trinity Catholic Church. “Also if the police officer need to call to verify the ID information, is easier to take the call and say ‘yes, this person is a parishioner here.’”

“This is a challenge for each parish,” Father Walsh said. “We don’t want to start chaos at a parish, but each parish will be organized to start registrations and find a way to give the photo ID.”

Bishop Edward Burns said “it is necessary for them to know that Holy Mother Church will always be with the members of the immigrant community, because Our Lord Jesus Christ was a member of the immigrant community, and so we are one family and we need to take care of each other.”

Numerous members of various parishes applauded the news of the parish identification card.

“Today was about unity and no discrimination,” said Miguel Angel Cortes, a member of San Juan Diego Catholic Church. “Thank God that parish ID is going to be accepted; that is a joy.”

Father Michael Forge, pastor of Mary Immaculate Catholic Church, said his parish is currently working on a sample parish ID that is different from the Safe Environment Identification Card.

“They know that I’m their pastor and we are in this together, they are not second class citizens by any means, they are parishioners, they are members of the flock,” Father Forge said.