



Diocese of Brownsville

Office of the Bishop

1910 University Boulevard • Brownsville, Texas 78520

P. O. Box 2279 • 78522-2279

(956) 542-2501 • Fax (956) 542-6751

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Dear Brother Priests:

In the year since my installation as Bishop of the Diocese of Brownsville, I have spent much time visiting the parishes, community organizations, business leaders and others across the Valley. During this time, I have learned much about the Valley and its people. But regrettably, I learned that close to 40% of families in the Valley live in poverty, we have over 50% of our young people dropping out of school, and we are continually plagued with inadequate access to health care by having the largest number of uninsured in the State. I'm sure this is not news to those of you ministering to the community for many years, but we have a call not only to hear the pain but to take action to relieve the suffering.

In Pope Benedict's encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* he says "The Church... cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice. She has to play her part through rational argument and she has to reawaken the spiritual energy without which justice, which always demands sacrifice, cannot prevail and prosper" (no. 28a.) I want to thank those of you who have worked over the years for justice, better education and health care throughout the Rio Grande Valley.

I had the pleasure to meet with the leadership of Valley interfaith during a tour of the Valley shortly after I arrived, and have invited them to organize the ecumenical session on Humane Immigration Reform. I applaud the work in helping bring water and waste water to over 160,000 people across the Valley, increasing wages for public sector workers to alleviate poverty, working with thousands of residents in acquiring their citizenship, improving learning environments in and around our public schools and the list continues with twenty-eight years of victories.

Hence, I encourage you as pastors to consider whether Valley Interfaith might be of assistance to you as you seek to address the problems affecting the communities. I also encourage you to contact the leadership of Valley Interfaith to discuss with them your perspective on the work of promoting a more just society here in the Rio Grande Valley.

Fraternally yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Daniel E. Flores, S.T.D.
Bishop of Brownsville