

THE MONITOR

Valley Interfaith to Launch Local Parish ID Strategy

Francisco E. Jimenez September 25, 2019

PHARR — Valley Interfaith announced the launch of the parish identification strategy at a meeting on Tuesday.

The parish identification strategy is intended to provide all members of parishes with a way to identify themselves to local law enforcement, particularly those individuals who have immigrated to the United States and do not have a state-issued ID.

“Today we’re gathering with the different churches from the Diocese of Brownsville and other interfaith and religious organizations to start a program to provide IDs within our parishes for citizens, residents and immigrants throughout the Valley and throughout our religious communities,” said Eddie Anaya, who is on the executive committee for Valley Interfaith.

The announcement was made on Tuesday evening to a standing-room-only crowd at the Pharr Development and Research Center. Among those in attendance were Bishop Daniel Flores from the Diocese of Brownsville, Sister Norma Pimentel, executive director for Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley, and law enforcement representatives from Pharr, McAllen and Edinburg.

The ID cards will show a picture of the cardholder, name, date of birth, address, and how long the cardholder has been a member of their parish.

“One of the things that we want to do is start a relationship of trust between the police departments throughout the Valley and the communities themselves,” Anaya said. “There are several benefits. People who don’t have IDs, it’s very important for



Bishop Daniel Flores of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brownsville was one of several speakers who spoke at a press conference hosted by Valley Interfaith in which they discussed local congressman’s stance on the DACA discharge petition in Congress and other changes regarding Homeland Security.

them so they can report crimes if they have to. So that they do not live in fear, which in some cases they do. And so that they can identify themselves to the police departments as to who they are, that they are members of an institution, of a church, where they live and how long they have lived here.”

Anaya said that he believes that both communities and police departments stand to benefit from local parishes providing IDs to their congregation.

“Also I think it’s important to clarify that as a U.S. citizen, as a resident and as an immigrant, we all are going to have this parish ID,” Anaya added. “I believe that the church will benefit as well in that people will be embraced and welcomed as members of our church.”

Members of churches from throughout the Valley attended the announcement. Among them was St. Eugene de Mazenod Parish of Brownsville, who are led by the Rev. Kevin A. Collins.

“I’m very excited about this event tonight because we have a lot of people coming who hope to change their lives, to have less fear in their lives, and to live with more human dignity in their homes and their neighborhoods,” said Collins.

Collins, who has been a priest for 35 years, and in Brownsville for four years, said that he has seen first-hand the fear that some members of his congregation live with.

“I’ve had people come to me, especially those with citizen children, who are very worried about being separated from their children and all the fear that goes with that,” Collins said. “It’s something that really motivates me to want to make sure that we get up and tell people that this will help them, and that they will have another way to try to continue with their lives with a little less fear.”

Edinburg Police Chief Cesar Torres said that he likes the idea of the ID card because he believes that it will make people safer.

“I kind of like it. I don’t have an issue with it at all,” Torres said. “It’s important because right now we have a lot of victims that are from across (the border). They don’t call the police department when they are victimized because they are afraid of being deported. If we recognize some type of ID, they’ll feel more comfortable and call us when crimes do occur.”