



Department of Life, Dignity & Justice
Advocacy & Justice for Immigrants

The Catholic Church and SB 54

With SB 54 – The California Values Act – taking center stage once more as cities across Southern California elect to stand in opposition to this law, we have prepared this Q & A to outline what SB 54 means and why the Catholic Church supports this necessary law.

Q: What is SB 54 and why do we need it?

A: SB 54 – also known as The California Values Act – was a senate bill, adopted and became law in January 2018. It defines the role of local and state law enforcement as it relates to immigration enforcement. Specifically, it ensures that the duty of enforcing immigration policy is placed in the hands of federal agencies as immigration law falls within the parameters of federal law.

This law allows for increased trust between an immigrant community that has been living in fear with increased immigration enforcement, while also strengthening public safety by allowing immigrants the necessary cover to cooperate with local and state agencies. Prior to the passing of this bill into law, the increased fear within immigrant communities saw immigrants choosing to avoid law enforcement as victims of crimes and even refusing to testify at trials out of fear of running afoul of immigration enforcement. By appropriately designating the role of local and state law enforcement as being devoted solely to local and state public safety instead of being responsible for enforcing federal policy, the natural trust needed between members of the community and our law enforcement officers can take root.

Q: Why does the Catholic Church support this law?

A: Because it is reflective of our faith to craft a society that balances the need for security with honoring the dignity of every human being. Studies from groups like the Public Policy Institute of California as well as simple statistics from nationwide jailing reports note that there is no truth to the idea that immigrants – documented or undocumented – are more prone to crime. And yet, as immigration policy is once more front-and-center in the national consciousness, there are some that would have you believe that immigrants bring crime.

Our faith tradition is born of immigrants: the Nation of Israel were commanded in Exodus (20:21) to treat strangers with respect as Israel were once strangers in Egypt; Moses was an unaccompanied minor who could only survive to lead Israel out of bondage on the warmth and kindness of his foster mother; and the Holy Family were refugees to Egypt, fleeing persecution in their own homeland. A faith born in Bethlehem that crossed an ocean to land here, our Church is very much part of the immigrant experience.

And so we stand in solidarity with our immigrant community and continue to support this law. As the California Catholic Conference of Bishops noted in their support of SB 54 this past Fall: “By signing the California Values Act, SB 54, Governor Jerry Brown has joined with the Legislature in taking a positive step forward in the protection of some of the most vulnerable residents of California. In a responsible way, SB 54 will help strengthen trust, promote common sense and address the deficiencies and injustices in our broken Federal immigration system, while still protecting our communities.”

Q: What can I do to ensure SB 54 remains implemented in my community?

A: Here are a few steps that you can take to aid our immigrant community by supporting SB 54

- Educate yourself on the Catholic Church's teachings on immigration by reviewing documents such as *Strangers No Longer* or visit the California Catholic Conferences website (www.cacatholic.org) and review the statements in support of SB 54.
- Call, write, e-mail and visit your local city council member and register your support for SB 54 and ask them to ensure that your city stands with the immigrant community and for better public safety by supporting this law.
- Speak to your family, friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners and ask them to stand in support of SB 54 by attending the Riverside City Council meeting on June 12, 2018 in the Council Chambers and say 'No to hate and fear'.

We can only achieve these incremental steps towards justice and peace by taking the necessary steps together. May we stand strong in the hope of Christ as an Easter people and bring the light of mercy into the homes of the most vulnerable among us.

SB 54 Hearing POSTPONED to July!
Join us June 20 for a 'How-To' Engage
your City Council workshop



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