Keeping St. Joseph University Parish Welcome and Safe: Our Policies

St. Joseph University Parish
3269 Main St.
Buffalo, NY 14214

Preamble

St. Joseph University Parish is a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive faith community. We are dedicated to the proposition that everyone is safe, respected, and protected while using our facilities. In alignment with our commitment to pastoral care, solidarity, and the dignity of every human person, we are dedicated to protecting the privacy and personal information of everyone who worships, gathers, or seeks assistance within our community. The policies within this document reflect our shared expectations in accomplishing this.

A. PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SPACES

The purpose of this public and private spaces policy is to clearly define the areas of St. Joseph University Parish, located at 3269 Main St., Buffalo, NY 14214, that are considered public versus those that are considered private spaces, thus ensuring the safety, confidentiality, and well-being of our congregation, staff, volunteers, students, visitors, and those we serve. This policy also outlines the procedures for accessing these spaces and the legal protections applicable to different areas of our church property.

Definitions

Public spaces: Areas that are open and accessible to the public during designated times, such as worship services and community events.

Private spaces: Areas that are restricted to authorized individuals, including church staff, volunteers, and designated personnel.

Public spaces specifically

The following areas are designated as our public spaces during worship hours, designated parish and community events, and all times that our church is open to the congregation and visitors:

- Sanctuary (except for the choir loft)
- Sacristy
- Father Jacob Ledwon Community Room
- Restrooms in public areas

- Church grounds and parking lot (accessible to those attending all worship events and designated community events)

While these areas are open to the public during worship and special events, our church leadership reserves the right to manage access as needed for safety, security, and the well-being of our congregation, volunteers, and visitors.

Private spaces specifically

The following areas are designated as private spaces at all times, thus requiring prior authorization or a valid church related purpose for their use. In some cases, access may also require a background check.

- One single sign for Hallway to rectory, Church basement, and Church rectory (unless being used for meetings or social events and so designated at those times)
- Parish Center/offices
- Choir loft

Access to private spaces

Only authorized staff, volunteers, or individuals with specific permission may enter private spaces.

Law enforcement, or any official seeking entry into private areas, must present a **valid judicial warrant signed by a federal or state judge**. Staff and volunteers are not authorized to grant access without consulting church leadership.

Private areas will be clearly marked with appropriate signage indicating restricted access. We recognized that in the spirit of welcoming, we do not want these signs to be off-putting to people attending our church and have determined the size/style/frequency of signage by taking such concerns into consideration.

B. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY OF INFORMATION

The purpose of our confidentiality and privacy policy is to ensure that all who intersect with St. Joseph University Parish can expect and receive strict confidentiality regarding immigration and/or citizenship status. Maintaining the confidentiality and trust of our community is a core requirement of service at St. Joseph University Parish.

Scope

This policy applies to all parishioners, students, visitors, volunteers, staff, and any individuals who attend Mass, participate in parish ministries, utilize parish services, or attend parish or community events hosted by St. Joseph University Parish.

Policy

St. Joseph University Parish **does not collect, record, or maintain** information regarding the immigration or citizenship status of any parishioner, visitor, or participant in our programs. No registration form, sacramental record, or census inquiry made by us will ever request this information or cause such information to be maintained.

Because we do not collect immigration status information, we do not possess it to share. Furthermore, the parish **will not cooperate with, disclose, or report** any personal information to federal, state, or local law enforcement authorities, unless explicitly required by a specific, legally sufficient, judicial warrant or judicial subpoena signed by a federal or state judge.

Protection of general personal information

Regarding general parish administrative information (such as parishioner registration, weekly giving, or sacramental preparation), we only collect basic contact information (e.g., name, address, phone number, email). This data is kept strictly confidential and is used solely for internal parish communication and administrative purposes. We do not sell, rent, or trade parishioner contact or personal data to third-party organizations or commercial entities. All parish clergy, staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers are instructed on this policy.

Staff and volunteer commitment

Staff and volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality regarding the individuals they serve. No personal information about members, visitors, or program participants will be shared without explicit consent.

Conversations regarding sensitive topics should take place in private areas to maintain confidentiality.

C. ENFORCEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

The Pastoral Council and parish leadership have approved an action plan for enforcement of the policies set forth in this document. To the extent that specific educational, enforcement, and compliance materials regarding these policies separately exist, the provisions of those documents are incorporated into and made a part of this document.

The action plan includes the following:

- The formation and training of a response team: that is, the designation of parish staff and designated volunteers who will be responsible for monitoring access to private areas during worship and other events.
- Defining, mapping, and posting signage of private spaces.
- Education of pastoral staff and volunteers regarding information gathering, privacy, and confidentiality.
- Specific and continued training of all necessary individuals in the implementation of all policies set forth in this document.
- Facilitating continued dialogue of the polices in this document.

D. CONCLUSION

The policies set forth in this document reflect St. Joseph University Parish's commitment to creating a welcoming, inclusive, secure, and respectful environment for all who enter our spaces. By designating public and private areas, by setting forth our privacy and information sharing policies, by reasonable and appropriate compliance training, and by continued discussion of these policies, we seek to create safe and hospitable worship and meeting spaces.

Approved by:

Rev. Daniel J. Sabatini

Date of approval:

10/28/26

Action Plan for Immigration Enforcement

St. Joseph University Parish
3269 Main St.
Buffalo, NY 14214

Preamble

This Action Plan for Immigration Enforcement is grounded in Catholic social teaching on the dignity of every human person, the command to "welcome the stranger" (Matthew 25:35), and the U.S. bishops' and Bishop Michael W. Fisher's pastoral letter *Once Aliens, Too* (December 2025). It affirms that human dignity and border security are compatible, while insisting that enforcement must be humane, targeted, and respectful of families and communities. St. Joseph University Parish minsters to all God's children regardless of immigration status.

Disclaimers: This is **not legal advice**. Laws and ICE policies can change rapidly. "Sanctuary" is a moral and pastoral commitment, not a legal shield. Harboring (concealing with intent to prevent detection) carries potential federal criminal liability; routine ministry without inquiry into status does not.

Action Plan

1. Immediate Response If ICE Arrives on SJUP Campus

Step 1: Alert the Team

- Designated greeter/staff immediately notifies the Response Team via group text. Pastor or designate takes lead. Lock all internal doors leading to private areas.

Step 2: Greet and Document

- Politely ask through a window or barrier: "How may we help you? Do you have a judicial warrant?"
- State firmly, "Under DHS policy, this parish is a designated protected area. We request that you respect this sacred place."
- Record interactions in writing and by phone video if safe. Important information to collect: Date/time, agent names/badge numbers, vehicle info, exact words stated by agents, number of agents, purpose stated.
- Do not consent to any search.
- Explicitly instruct staff to communicate non-consent clearly and use structural barriers (like a close door or window) when inspecting a warrant.

Step 3: Public Areas

- Agents may enter and observe/ask questions.
- Staff/volunteers: Remain silent on status questions. Do not point out, identify or move toward specific individuals. Direct agents to pastor.
- Continue worship or activities calmly.
- Do not point out or identify individuals.

Step 4: Private Areas

- Agents need a **valid judicial warrant** (signed by a federal judge, on court form, specifically naming SJUP address, describing areas to search, and setting forth the dates and times the search can occur).
- Administrative warrant (ICE Form I-200/I-205) or ICE detainer is **not** for agents to enter private areas.
- **Do not open the door to a private area to review paperwork. Opening a locked door, even to talk, can be legally interpreted as granting implied consent to enter and search.**
- Procedure: Ask to see the physical warrant. Have a second person witness and review the warrant. Ask agent to slip warrant under door or view through window if needed. Do not open locked doors to speak with agents to review paperwork. Read the document through a window or have them slide it under the door. **State clearly: "I do not consent to a search of these private premises without a valid judicial warrant."**
- Immediately contact the pastor and **do not** allow entry until validity of warrant is confirmed. Again. opening a locked door, even to talk, can be legally interpreted as granting implied consent to enter and search.
- If the agents present a valid judicial warrant: Comply only with what it authorizes.
- Accompany agents while they are performing the search. Document everything that the agents search and review.

Step 5: If an Arrest Occurs

- Pastor (or designate) may offer to accompany the individual pastorally (prayer, contact family/attorney) if the person consents and agents allow.
- If an individual is detained, immediately ask the agents: **"Which detention facility is this individual being taken to?"** Note the exact time, the names of the arresting officers, and the license plate numbers of the transport vehicles. This may allow the individual to be located immediately before they are transferred out of Western New York.
- Do not interfere with the arrest.

Step 6: De-Escalation

- Stay calm. Have one calm spokesperson. Avoid crowds gathering around agents.

2. Documentation and Follow-Up

- Within 1 hour: Write detailed incident report, with the following information to be included:
  - Date of enforcement action.
  - Time action began and ended
  - Description of enforcement action:

        - How many agents
        - What agency conducted the action (i.e., ICE, local or state police, etc.)
        - Names and/or badge numbers of agents
        - How did their uniforms identify them
        - What did they say they were there for
    - Did you ask to see a warrant?
    - Did the agents present a warrant?
    - If not, did you deny them consent to entry? What did you say? How did they react if you denied them consent to enter?
    - If the agents presented a warrant, was a designated individual alerted? Who?
    - Was the warrant an administrative warrant, signed by an immigration official?
    - If it was an administrative warrant, did you tell the agents that SJUP has a policy of denying access to private areas in the absence of judicial warrant? What did you say?
    - How did the agents react if you denied them consent to enter based on an administrative warrant?
    - Did the agents present a judicial warrant, signed by a judge? If so, describe the warrant:
        - What was the date of the warrant?
        - What items or persons were the subjects of the search?
        - What areas were identified to be searched?
        - Which judge signed the warrant?
    - Did you allow the agents entry based on a judicial warrant?
    - If so, did you or another individual accompany them on their search? Who?
    - Did the agents stay within the areas they were authorized to search by the warrant? If not, what other areas did they enter?
    - Did they look in closed closets, cabinets or drawers? Did they ask permission first?
    - Did they keep anyone from moving around freely? Who?
- Report to immigrant-rights tracking coalitions, such as Buffalo Immigrant & Refugee Defense. These organizations monitor patterns in ICE enforcement.
- If rights appear violated (e.g., entry without warrant, intimidation), consult an attorney about complaints to ICE Office of Professional Responsibility, DHS, or civil suit.
- Pastoral follow-up: Reach out to affected family/parishioner (with consent), offer Mass intention.
- Debrief team within 24–48 hours; offer spiritual care.

3. Communication

- **Internal**: Controlled message to staff first, then parish if needed (e.g., "We are cooperating with legal counsel and upholding our ministry to all").
- **External/Media**: Only through designated spokesperson after consulting attorney. Emphasize Catholic teaching and hospitality.
- Notify Diocese Chancery immediately for support and unified response.

4. Continued Compliance

- Review and update this plan annually or after any policy change.
- Print copies for staff, keep digital in secure shared drive.
- Train the team at least twice per year.

Conclusion

By preparing calmly and acting with charity and prudence, SJUP will continue to live out the Gospel commands to welcome the stranger and treat every individual with respect and dignity, while complying the law.

Approved by:

Date of approval:

9/21/26