



## THE RT. REV. DR. JONATHAN H. FOLTS Bishop

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### BISHOP'S STATEMENT TO THE DIOCESE *ILLEGAL RACIAL PROFILING* Feast of the Presentation / February 2, 2025

Last week, a priest in our diocese was unlawfully racially profiled. When he answered a knock on his door, a man, without showing any identification or stating who he represented, threateningly asked, "You aren't from around here, are you?" The priest responded politely and removed his cap. The man recognized him and returned to the passenger side of an SUV with tinted windows and no license plates. The SUV and its passengers then drove away.

Additionally, it was shared in a diocesan clergy meeting last Thursday that three members of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate were detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) without cause. The tribal identification cards they produced upon being stopped were not recognized as valid forms of ID, and they were taken into custody until they were eventually released. Furthermore, Native Americans in different parts of the United States are facing [racial profiling](#) by ICE and being illegally detained.

Biblically, morally, and legally, we reject and condemn this fear-mongering behavior. We stand with tribal leaders in support of Native Americans who are being targeted; we stand with our Dinka siblings who worship at Holy Apostles in Sioux Falls; and we stand with all those whose skin color is reason enough in the eyes of some for them to be detained and questioned. Racial profiling is inherently racist and sinful and does not represent behavior worthy of God's kingdom.

I am hereby directing all our clergy to become as informed as possible on these matters and offer all the pastoral support they can. It is crucial that their parishioners and community members know where to obtain the necessary forms of identification and know what to do if they are illegally detained by ICE or anyone else in authority. I also encourage anyone who experiences this behavior to report it to their local or tribal authorities for documentation. Additionally, our diocese will create a dedicated website page offering resources and information on a person's rights should they be unlawfully detained.

Jesus repeatedly told his followers, "Be not afraid." I strongly echo Jesus' words because the aim of oppressors is to instill fear in the oppressed. At the same time, I encourage our Native American and Dinka siblings, as well as everyone who is being targeted because of their skin color, to stay informed and be vigilant. You are not alone, and we will fight this fear with you.

**One of our own priests was targeted at his home** – so let no one say, "It can't happen here." It can. It has. It is. And rest assured, we will not remain silent or passive in responding.

**"Being the Church Many People Don't Expect Us To Be."**