



Father Luis Gerardo asks a question of police officials from the Dallas-area at the Dallas Area Interfaith's discussion of parish IDs at Mary Immaculate Catholic Church in Farmers Branch, TX (photo credit: Ron Heflin).

Parish Identification Card Toolkit

What Is a Parish Identification Card (ID)?

A Parish ID is an alternative form of identification that allows immigrants and others in the community who have difficulty obtaining or are unable to obtain government-issued identification to have a valid way of identifying themselves to local law enforcement. Parish IDs confirm that individuals are who they say they are, that they are a part of the community, and that they have the support of community members and the church behind them.

It is very important to note that parish IDs are not a government-issued form of identification and they can only be used in places and in situations that have been specified and outlined. But while Parish IDs are not government issued, they are agreed upon to be considered a valid form of identification by the local law enforcement and other local officials like the city mayor. The details of what is included on a parish ID will vary from community to community and is dependent on what is agreed to by the community stakeholders involved in the creation of the ID. Some examples of what information might be listed on a parish ID can include:

- A photo of the recipient.
- The recipient's name, the name of the parish they are a member of, their home address or the address of their parish.
- The recipient's date of birth, the date the parish ID is issued and expires, as well as a church-issued ID number.
- The parish ID also might include the disclaimer that the ID is not an official government issued identification card.



Parish ID example from St. Joseph Pro-Cathedral, Camden, NJ in the Diocese of Camden

Why Are Parish IDs Needed?

Changes in Policies: In the past couple years, changes to immigration enforcement in communities across the United States and [changes](#) to who is considered a priority for deportation by the Department of Homeland Security¹ have led to deepening feelings of fear and anxiety throughout immigrant communities. Additionally, several states have issued laws attempting to codify the new federal changes at the state level². For example, the number of non-criminal immigrants arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in communities across the US has more than [tripled](#)—from 15,353 in Fiscal Year 2016 to 53,441 in Fiscal Year 2018. Formerly 'low-priority' cases of non-criminal immigrants are now facing arrests and deportations at a higher level.

¹ Muzaffar Chishti, Sarah Pierce, and Randy Capps, "Executive Power Showdown: Congress and White House Quarrel over Immigration Spending," *Migration Information Source*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/executive-power-showdown-congress-white-house-immigration>.

² In 2017 Texas passed SB4 which requires local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration regulations, <https://www.capitol.state.tx.us/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=85R&Bill=SB4>.

Fear in Communities: Many immigrants living in the US undocumented and without valid government-issued identification are afraid to go out in the community for fear of possibly encountering federal immigration officials as well as local law enforcement who might then hand them over to ICE. Many undocumented individuals also remain hesitant to report crimes committed against them to local law enforcement for fear of their own arrest, possible deportation, and separation from their children, loved ones, and community.

Antonio's Story

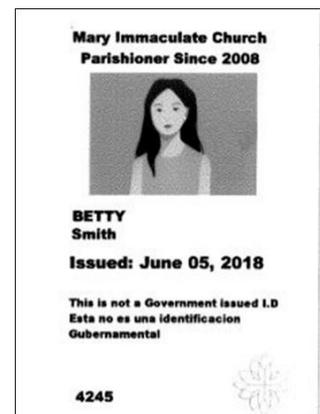
Courtesy of BUILD and the Archdiocese of Baltimore

Antonio asked for a blessing one Sunday after Mass at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in the Highlandtown neighborhood of Baltimore. Not an unusual request - a birthday or anniversary, preparation for a trip, sudden illness, problems at home or work, and just plain bad luck are among the reasons blessings are sought in church after Mass. It was none of these. A few days before, Antonio was working on his car in the street in front of his house. He was head-first, reaching under the hood, when someone at close range shouted. Startled, he turned and looked up only to be met with a splash of gasoline in his face. Taking advantage of his vulnerable state, his assailant robbed him. Antonio didn't call the police because he feared it could make the situation worse. He said, "I don't have a way to tell the police that I belong here and that people know me." Antonio has no identification, if he did have a way to prove to the police who he is, like with a parish ID, he may have felt safe to call the police to report what had happened to him.

With the availability of parish IDs, if a parish ID holder is stopped by local police or calls the police to report a crime, they are able to identify themselves and prove to the police that they live in the community and that there are people in the community who know them.

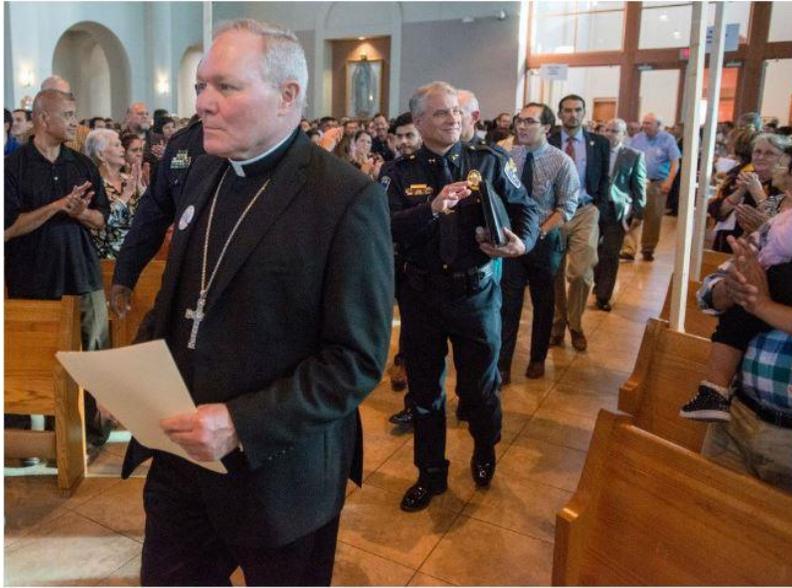
What Are Some of the Impacts of Parish IDs?

Parish IDs can help alleviate a lot of fear and anxiety that those living without valid identification can experience. Parish IDs can also help community members feel more secure and connected to their parish and wider community. And when these individuals feel more connected to their parish and community, they will oftentimes feel more comfortable to volunteer and engage more with others and able to participate even more so in their community. This in turn can help in building stronger relationships between immigrants, the parishes that they are a part of, and the Church as a whole, and empower immigrants to become leaders in their own communities.



Parish ID example from Mary Immaculate Church, Farmers Branch, TX in the Diocese of Dallas

Parish IDs can help ensure that all community members feel protected and confident when interacting with their local police as well as when reporting crimes to local law enforcement, especially in cases where they are victims of crime themselves. Local law enforcement in turn is also able to better serve the whole community and to protect the wellbeing of all who live there. Lastly, parish IDs can help to increase dialogue and strengthen the relationship between immigrant communities and local law enforcement, making the community as a whole stronger.



Diocese of Dallas Bishop Edward J. Burns, clergy, and law enforcement and city officials from the Dallas-area attend a meeting on immigration and policing at Mary Immaculate Catholic Church in Farmers Branch, TX (photo credit: Robert W. Hart).

Parish IDs in the Community

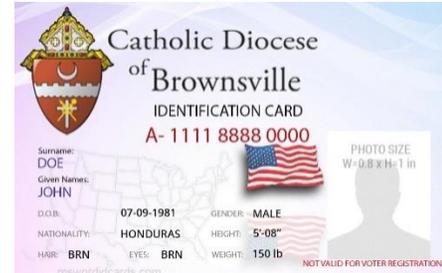
Every Community is Different: When thinking about creating a parish ID program in your own community it is very important to take into account that every community is different, this means that every parish ID program needs to be tailored to the particular relationships, needs, and policies of each community. The reason for the creation of Parish IDs should be rooted in the daily lives and experiences of the people who are going to benefit or use the ID and meet their direct needs as well as reflect law enforcement and local elected leaders needs for greater transparency and engagement with the undocumented community.

Parish IDs Can:

- Be considered as an aid to properly identify an individual when approached by law enforcement.
- Help restore confidence and comfort to immigrant community members in reporting crimes, especially when these individuals are victims, to law enforcement.
- Foster a healthy relationship between immigrant communities and local law enforcement.

Parish IDs Can't:

- Be considered a government-issued ID or driver's license.
- Be considered valid for voter registration.
- In any way, shape, or form protect anyone from being prosecuted for any criminal violation.



Parish ID example from the Diocese of Brownsville, TX

Planning and Creation of Parish IDs

Below is a general outline for the planning and creation of a parish ID program in your own community. Please keep in mind that this is just a framework and that the process in each community may look different.

1) Preparation:

- **Develop a team** of local community and church leaders, attorneys, and local government and law enforcement officials who can come together to discuss the needs and goals for the parish ID program and help to coordinate the implementation of the program.
- **Research** different parish ID programs already in existence. Some good programs to research include the parish ID programs in [Dallas](#), [Baltimore](#), [Camden](#), and [Brownsville](#). Click [here](#) to view the parish ID PowerPoint created by Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) broad-based organizations to find out more about how several communities launched parish IDs of their own. Reach out to those individuals who are already coordinating parish ID programs in their own communities.
 - Some individuals you can contact include: Josephine Lopez-Paul, Dallas Area Interfaith <dallasareainterfaith1@gmail.com> or 214-689-5988; Father Bruce Lewandowski, Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church, Archdiocese of Baltimore <bruce.lewandowski@archbalt.org>; Father Michael Forge, Mary Immaculate Catholic Church, Diocese of Dallas <frmichaelf@maryimmaculatechurch.org>.
- **Hold listening sessions** with members of the community and your local police to discuss what the needs and fears of the community are and create a space for dialogue between immigrants in the community and local law enforcement officials.

2) Creating the Parish ID:

- **Create a budget and outline** with local leaders and community members to develop an outline for the purpose of the parish ID program.
- **Develop the design** for the parish ID. When designing the ID be sure to include important information; it can include the name, date of birth, address, photo, and parish an individual is a part of.
- **Develop the application requirements** to apply for the parish ID. Some examples of requirements include being a registered parishioner for a certain amount of time, having to attend an orientation on the purpose and use of the ID, presenting another form of

ID (birth certificate, utility bill, passport), having a witness who can verify the applicants identity.

- **Ensure the protection of community members' information.** It is essential to ensure before any personal information is collected and before any IDs are distributed that the personal information gathered from everyone who receives a parish ID is protected and will remain secure. This is hugely important so individuals can feel safe in applying for the ID and trust that their personal information cannot be accessed and used by federal immigration officials.

3) Launching the Parish ID:

- **Hold an official launch** for the parish ID program to educate the whole community as to its purpose and have a media presence at the launch. Be sure to plan the launch with input from community members and invite bishops, parishes, law enforcement officials, the mayor, and local community officials to participate as well.
- **Create space for feedback** from community members to continue to revise and further develop the features and uses of parish ID.



Parish ID example from Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Baltimore, MD in the Archdiocese of Baltimore



Photo from BUILD, a Parish ID Session at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Baltimore, MD in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The participants learned how the parish ID came to be, where and how it can be used, and received a "know your rights" training.

A special thanks to the Diocese of Dallas, the Diocese of Brownsville, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Dallas Area Interfaith (DAI-IAF), Valley Interfaith (IAF), and Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD-IAF), who provided the examples and resources for this toolkit and who helped make the creation of this toolkit possible.

Additional Resources:

Example Parish ID Application Form



Mary Immaculate Parish I.D

Date _____

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth ___/___/___ Gender: Male Female Age _____

Phone Number: _____

Place of Birth _____

Email Address: _____

Full Address (including Apartment number)

Forms of Identification (mark all applicable)

- Form of ID from your Country
- Bill with name and current address
- Birth Certificate
- Driver's License or Passport (even if expired)

Name of the Catholic Church closest to where you live currently

Name of church

Office use only

Scanned Documents

Photo Taken

Parish I.D#: _____

Note: The Parish I.D is strictly for Identification, it does not serve as a driver's license

2800 Valwood Pkwy Farmers Branch, Texas 75234 - Phone Number 972-243-7104

Example Parish ID Application Form in Spanish



Identificación Parroquial de Mary Immaculate

Fecha _____

Nombre Completo: _____

Fecha de Nacimiento ____/____/____ Género: Masculino Femenino
Mes Día Año

Edad ____ Número de Teléfono: _____

Lugar de Nacimiento _____

Correo Electrónico: _____

Dirección Completa (incluyendo número de Apartamento)

Formas de Identificación (marque las que apliquen)

- Identificación de su País
- Recibo de servicio que esté a su nombre con su dirección actual
- Acta de Nacimiento
- Licencia de manejar o Pasaporte (aún sí esta vencida)

Nombre de la Iglesia Católica en el área donde usted vive actualmente

Nombre de la Iglesia

Uso de Oficina solamente:

Documentos escaneados

Foto Tomada

Parish I.D#: _____

Nota: La Identificación Parroquial es estrictamente para identificarle a usted. No es válida como Licencia de Manejo

2800 Valwood Pkwy Farmers Branch, Texas 75234 - Phone Number 972-243-7104



we are one family under God