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Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, speaks during an immigration conference at The Catholic University of America in Washington April 11, 2024. (OSV News/Catholic University of America/Patrick Ryan)



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Washington — April 30, 2024

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A leading Catholic bishop on the U.S.-Mexico border has expressed "grave concern" that the 2024 presidential race between Democrat Joe Biden and Republican Donald Trump could lead to further demonization of migrants seeking to enter the country.

"I'm concerned about the election period very much," El Paso, Texas, Bishop Mark Seitz told National Catholic Reporter. "It seems that politicians have latched on to immigration as a way to mobilize their bases."

"They found that when they can zero in to a kind of primordial fear that we have of the other, the person we do not know ... it raises these very fundamental fears," said Seitz, speaking in an interview for NCR's [The Vatican Briefing](#) podcast. "And it can also move them to support the candidate that assures that he or she is going to protect us from those fears."

Seitz, who has served in El Paso since 2013 and is currently the chairman of the U.S. bishops' migration committee, also said that some Christians "are more formed, it seems, in their thoughts, in their behaviors, by the political sort of thinking than by church teaching."

"They want to make their Christianity fit their political outlook rather than the other way around, and that concerns me also," said the bishop.

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Seitz spoke as part of an episode of "The Vatican Briefing" that also features a conversation between co-hosts Joshua McElwee and Christopher White about the Vatican's ongoing process for the Synod of Bishops and the [recent announcement](#) of Pope Francis' plans to travel in September to Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore.

In his podcast interview, Seitz also spoke about recent efforts by the state of Texas [to shut down](#) Annunciation House, a Catholic migrant shelter network in El Paso. Asked about comments he made in March about the "militarization" of the border, the bishop spoke of "the criminalization of human beings for being human beings."

"People escaping persecution are not criminals," said Seitz. "They need to be able to find a place of refuge."

"Where do people go?" the bishop asked. "What options do we leave them with? How would you or I feel if we were in a situation where we needed refuge somewhere?"



Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, leads the community in prayer at the march "Do Not Be Afraid: March and Vigil for Human Dignity" before hundreds process toward Sacred Heart Church in El Paso for a prayer vigil for the respect of migrants' rights on March 21, 2024. (OSV News/Courtesy of Hope Border Institute/Diego Adame)

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