



DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE



CATHOLIC
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Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). The Lord entrusts to the Church's motherly love every person forced to leave their homeland in search of a better future. This solidarity must be concretely expressed at every stage of the migratory experience – from departure through journey to arrival and return. This is a great responsibility, which the Church intends to share with all believers and men and women of good will.

- Pope Francis, Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018

April 27, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

While it is clear that the immigration process is in dire need of reform, the issue of immigration policy and enforcement is both complicated and emotional. While we agree that there is room for disagreement and discussion with respect to immigration policy, we wish to remind our more than 1 million Catholic faithful in North Carolina of the stated positions of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) formed by Catholic social teaching and encourage personal reflection and formation on these issues.

The issue of immigration is not merely about policy, it is a moral concern impacting the human dignity and human rights of every person. While we must certainly respect our borders and our laws, we are particularly supportive of immigration policy reforms. Every day we see firsthand the consequences of a system that creates fear and anxiety amongst individuals who have become a vital part of our parishes and make substantial contributions to the economic and social fabric of our communities.

As Catholics, we advocate for the recognition that immigrants, as members of God's human family, are deserving of and must be granted the appropriate dignity as our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Jesus himself was a refugee and taught us to welcome the stranger and to realize that in welcoming the stranger, we are welcoming Christ Himself.

Our Catholic Charities offices stand ready to help with food and other household necessities for all families that find themselves in distress at this time. Through those offices we will continue to provide Legal Immigration Services via staff who have been accredited to complete legal documentation by the Board of Immigration Appeals in the Department of Justice. These DOJ Accredited Representatives assist families and individuals in achieving an immigration status that enables them to work, reunite with family members, or take steps toward becoming citizens who could contribute to the well-being of their family and society. We will not counsel anyone to thwart or resist proper law enforcement but will continue to provide education about individuals' legal rights.

On a broader level, we, the Bishops of North Carolina, and the Bishops of the United States¹ will continue working to:

- ***Find a Bipartisan Solution to Protect Dreamers.*** *The approximately 1.8 million Dreamers living in our country were brought to the United States as young people. They worship with*

us in our churches and synagogues, serve in our military, contribute to our economy, and add their many talents to American society.

- **Provide a Path to Citizenship.** *Dreamers know America as their only home and should not be denied the opportunity to obtain U.S. citizenship and participate fully in civic life.*
- **Recognize the Sanctity of Families.** *Family immigration is the foundation of our country and of our Church. Pope Francis states, "The family is the foundation of co-existence and a remedy against social fragmentation." We steadfastly know that families are what hold America together. We ask you to reject legislation that threatens family-based immigration.*
- **Recognize the Right of Nations to Control Their Borders.** *While Catholic social teaching on migration recognizes and respects the sovereignty of each nation to regulate its borders, this right must be balanced with the right of vulnerable migrants, such as asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking, to access protection. Border security should be proportional and justly implemented.*
- **Maintain Protections for Unaccompanied Children.** *A solution for Dreamers cannot be at the expense of other immigrant children. Such a tradeoff would be heartless and untenable. We ask that you maintain existing protections for unaccompanied children that help prevent trafficking and abuse and ensure their access to adequate care.*

As members of the human family, each individual deserves and must be granted, the dignity that not only supports and fosters the common good of our society but also reflects the reality that we are all fundamentally brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Mary, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the United States of America, watch over and pray for us now and always.



Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte



Most Reverend Luis Rafael Zarama
Bishop of Raleigh

¹ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/migrants-refugees-and-travelers/background-on-daca.cfm>