

Families Torn Apart

“Forcibly separating children from their mothers and fathers is ineffective to the goals of deterrence and safety and contrary to our Catholic values.”

Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, Bishop of Austin and Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration

In April Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced a zero-tolerance policy for unauthorized border crossings. This has led to the separation of families as parents crossing the border with their families are taken into the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service, and then their children are deemed to be “alien unaccompanied minors” and placed in the care of the U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services.

Between May 6 to May 19 alone, 638 adults crossing the border were referred for prosecution, separating them from the **658 children** who were migrating with them.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops is calling for an end to this tearing apart of families for several reasons, including:

- “Separating families at the border will be incredibly costly... Currently, if an individual is not referred for prosecution or detained, the families of those arriving and charitable groups provide assistance.”

With the policy change, taxpayers will be paying hundreds of dollars per day for each family detained. In contrast, Alternative to Detention (ATD) programs

are much more cost effective; “ATD programs ... can cost as little as \$5 per person per day and are extremely effective in ensuring compliance with immigration proceedings and orders.”



Unaccompanied child held by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Photo credit: Customs and Border Protection/ U.S. government



CNS photo/Edgard Garrido, Reuters

- Placing adults and children in separate immigration proceedings increases the immigration court backlog, already at over 692,000 cases, and makes it harder for these families to present evidence of the persecution that threatens their lives in their home countries.

- Most importantly, **“children are vulnerable and should not be separated from their parents.”** Family unity is a cornerstone of our American immigration system and a foundational element of Catholic teaching.”

The trauma of this forced separation on the parents and most especially on the children can cause lifelong psychological damage. People fleeing horrific violence in their own countries have suffered more than most of us can imagine. They have a right to apply for asylum no matter how they enter the United States. It is unconscionable that our government exacerbates their grief by tearing children from their fathers and mothers.

- Use the link below to **CALL ON CONGRESS** to
- (1) Tell the Department of Homeland Security Not to Separate Families
 - (2) Prevent DHS from Receiving Funding for This Harmful and Costly Practice
 - (3) Propose More Humane Solutions, Such As Alternatives to Detention.

www.justiceforimmigrants.org/action-alerts/

THANKS ARE IN ORDER

After we ask our elected officials to support good policies, we should thank them when they do what we want. Gratitude is important! Plus it reminds them that we are paying attention. Big thank yous for this month:



we are one family under God

1) Members of the House of Representatives **Tom Reed, Chris Collins, and John Katko**, whose districts include parts of our diocese, have all signed on to a “**discharge petition**” which would move debate on immigration reform, particularly the DREAM Act and the USA Act, to the floor of the House. These two bills, endorsed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, would provide a pathway to citizenship for young undocumented people who were brought to the U.S. as children.

Please call to **thank them** for their support AND ask them to **encourage their downstate colleague Rep. Peter King** to sign on as well. We need three more signers from the House by **Tuesday June 12** for this petition to pass. Please call the Capitol Switchboard at **(202) 224-3121** to reach their offices.



2) The late-term **abortion expansion bill** was not included in the New York State budget, and the Senate Health Committee recently defeated a stand-alone bill! However, measures to eliminate restrictions on late-term abortions and empower non-doctors to perform abortions could still get tacked on as an amendment to other bills before the legislative session ends this month.

The State Senators representing the counties within our diocese oppose abortion expansion. Write them a message at this link www.nyscatholic.org/nys-catholic-conference-action-center/ Be sure to edit the message to include your **thanks** for their opposition to this measure and your **encouragement** to stand firmly against it in whatever form it might be proposed.

Show your solidarity
with refugees worldwide



World Refugee Day

June 20

*Write a letter to the editor on refugees

*Use social media to voice your welcome of refugees

*Ask the President to permit more refugees into the U.S.

www.whitehouse.gov/contact/

Prayers and ideas here:
justiceforimmigrants.org/take-action/world-refugee-day/

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