



February 7, 2017

Dear Sisters, Seton Associates and Friends,

- Impelled by our Mission: *“Jesus Christ came “to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour” (Luke 4:18-29). The mission of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth is to proclaim and live this Gospel of Jesus Christ”*
- Directed by the responsibility to heed the call of God as heard through Moses: *“You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt” (Ex 23:9).*
- urged on by Jesus who directed His disciples to recognize Him in the stranger: *“Whatsoever you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me” (Mt. 25:40).*
- And keenly aware of our responsibilities as citizens of the United States to reach out in justice and peace to all and to work toward the common good especially for those on the margins...

The Sisters of Charity are challenged to respond to the Executive Order of President Trump concerning refugee and immigrant status. This order and its implementation oppose America’s founding values, raising moral issues that affect human dignity, justice and basic human rights. We cannot stand silent in the face of such chaos and alienation.

How ought we to respond?

**Prayer:** Common prayer and contemplative silence will strengthen a sense of communion among us that can empower us to welcome the stranger. Could we consider pausing each day for a few seconds as a reminder of this need and a sign of unity to say the Memorare and reflect on Matthew 25:43, “Jesus said, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me.”?



**Presence:** almost 158 years ago, we were founded to help meet the needs of immigrants, refugees, orphans, those needing education, health care and support. The Spirit calls us today to be present to our new neighbors who are seeking peace, safety and a full life. We must find new ways to help protect them and allay their fears to enable them to live full, productive lives.

**Witness:** as we reflect on the Congregation's 2013 Public Stand on Immigration, our housing of asylum seekers, work with immigrants and refugees, those in detention centers and more....let us keep ourselves informed. Let us speak out in truth for compassion and justice for all. If you encounter undocumented individuals and families, immigrants or refugees either directly or indirectly in your ministry please consider sharing some stories (confidential) and keep us informed of the effects of this Executive Order.

**Advocacy:** Fr. Terrence Moran, Director of our Office of Peace, Justice and Ecological Integrity and the PJEI Committee will keep us up to date on the larger, legislative picture. Please respond to the Action Alerts that we receive and share them with your families, friends, and collaborators in ministry. Let our representatives, municipal, state, and federal, know where you stand on the legislation being proposed. Please share with us the names of those you have contacted and their responses.

Please see Cardinal Tobin's balanced, courageous statement on immigration that is attached to this letter. Let us be united in responding to this challenge to welcome the stranger.

With hope and trust in God's presence among us,

Rosemary, Marilyn, Joan, Deborah, Maureen and Elise  
The Leadership Team

Rev. Terrence Moran  
Director  
Office of Peace, Justice and Ecological Integrity  
Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth

## **Statement of Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., On Wednesday's Executive Actions on Immigration**

**January 27, 2017**

I understand the desire for every American to be assured of safe borders and freedom from terrorism. The federal government should continue a prudent policy aimed at protecting citizens.

I also understand and heed the call of God, who through Moses told the people of Israel: "You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt" (Ex 23:9). Jesus asks His disciples to go further, calling on us to recognize Him in the stranger: "Whatsoever you did to the least of my brothers, you did to me" (Mt. 25:40).

Wednesday's Executive Actions do not show the United States to be an open and welcoming nation. They are the opposite of what it means to be an American.

Closing borders and building walls are not rational acts. Mass detentions and wholesale deportation benefit no one; such inhuman policies destroy families and communities. In fact, threatening the so-called "sanctuary cities" with the withdrawal of federal funding for vital services such as healthcare, education and transportation will not reduce immigration. It only will harm all good people in those communities.

I am the grandson of immigrants and was raised in a multicultural neighborhood in southwest Detroit. Throughout my life as a priest and bishop in the United States, I have lived and worked in communities that were enriched by people of many nationalities, languages and faiths. Those communities were strong, hard-working, law-abiding, and filled with affection for this nation and its people.

Here in Newark, we are in the final steps of preparing to welcome 51 refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is only the latest group of people whom Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese has helped to resettle during the past 40 years. This current group of refugees has waited years for this moment and already has been cleared by the federal government.

They have complied with all of the stringent requirements of a vetting process that is coordinated by the Department of Homeland Security. Catholic Charities, assisted by parishes and parishioners of the Archdiocese, will help them establish homes, jobs and new lives so that they can contribute positively to life in northern New Jersey. When this group is settled, we hope to welcome others.

This nation has a long and rich history of welcoming those who have sought refuge because of oppression or fear of death. The Acadians, French, Irish, Germans, Italians, Poles, Hungarians,

Jews and Vietnamese are just a few of the many groups over the past 260 years whom we have welcomed and helped to find a better, safer life for themselves and their children in America. Even when such groups were met by irrational fear, prejudice and persecution, the signature benevolence of the United States of American eventually triumphed.

That confident kindness is what has made, and will continue to make, America great.

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