

Bishop of Oakland calls for unity in response to executive orders regarding refugees and immigrants

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OAKLAND, CA – Bishop Michael Barber, SJ, Bishop of the Diocese of Oakland, has issued the following statement regarding President Trump's executive orders on immigrants and refugees and responses to those orders:

With all the rancor and division circulating in the media recently, I think it is good to remind ourselves who we are as Catholics and Christians.
We are Christ-centered, not politician-centered.
We are Gospel-centered, not political-agenda centered.
We desire unity, not division.

Christ and His teachings must come before our favorite political party, not the other way around. Therefore, as a Catholic, I am grateful for the support given by the new U.S. President to Life and protecting children in the womb. There have been 58 million abortions in our country since Roe v. Wade was passed in 1973. That was a sad day for America.

As a Catholic, and a disciple of Jesus Christ, I also believe that the decision to build a wall between Mexico and the USA is very disturbing. Every country has a right to protect its borders. But Communists build walls, not Americans. Remember President Reagan's words to President Gorbachev at the Berlin Wall in 1987.

I urge you to read the recent executive decisions by the President regarding immigration alongside Pope Francis' 2015 address to the US Congress.

In that memorable "world-pulpit" Pope Francis stressed the "transcendent dignity of the human being." Francis stressed we are human beings first. The Holy Father went on to say that the duty of government is "to protect, by means of the law, the image and likeness fashioned by God on every human face."

I notice that Lyft, the ride-sharing alternate-taxi service, just donated \$1 million dollars to the ACLU to support refugee resettlement in the USA. We've been doing that in our diocese for a year. Over half our parishes have volunteered to sponsor refugees, once vetted and cleared by the U.S. State Department. I hope we will continue to be able to perform that act of compassion under the new regulations. If you feel strongly about the President's recent decisions, why not join us in acts of mercy, rather than join the public fray of hate and division?

In closing, I wish to make my own [the excellent statement crafted and released by our diocesan Catholic Charities of the East Bay](#). I would only change one thing. Instead of saying "Catholic Charities of the East Bay stands with the immigrant, refugee, and migrant community". I would change it to "The Catholic Church" . . . "stands with the immigrant, refugee, and migrant

community. We oppose actions that promote fear and hostility towards people of all faiths and nationalities. We remain committed to our mission of welcoming the stranger through legal services, refugee resettlement, education, and community outreach. Toward this end, our legal team is resolved to continue filing applications for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) as long as the program exists.

Our country has welcomed people fleeing religious or political persecution, war, poverty or violence since its founding. The spirit and tenacity of our shared immigrant ancestry has shaped and defined our nation. As a faith community, the Catholic Church is an immigrant church with a long history of embracing newcomers and caring for migrants.

We know the stories of persecution, violence, and oppression that drive people – including children -- from their homelands seeking safe haven in the United States. Despite the rhetoric of fear, we believe that people of good will and conscience understand that for many this is a life or death situation, and choose to be on the side of life.

We will continue to provide our services and seek justice for immigrants, refugees and migrants. As an experienced leader with a long history serving the immigrant, refugee and migrant community in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties, we join the US Conference of Catholic Bishops in supporting comprehensive and compassionate Congressional reform and repair of our broken immigration system. This includes providing a path to permanent legal status for youth eligible for the Department of Homeland Security's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

This is a time where our solidarity with one another becomes more important than ever. Most important, we stand together to Act Justly, Love Kindness, and Walk Humbly with God (Micah 6:6-8).

Since 1935, Catholic Charities of the East Bay has provided hope and healing to the vulnerable through compassionate services that transform lives. Ever responsive to evolving social needs, our services have progressed through the decades. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit and service people in need regardless of religion, race, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation.

Last year, Catholic Charities of the East Bay served over 26,113 residents in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties and helped close to 1000 people enter the pathway to citizenship. We resettled 63 refugee families (total 173 people) from around the world.”

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