

Compassion

Faith doing justice in the Central and Southern Province...and beyond

July 2019

USCCB MOST RECENT STATEMENT ON MIGRATION

The desperate plight of immigrant children and families on the southern U.S.-Mexico border continues to make the news – and fill our hearts with sorrow, concern, horror and frustration. These sentiments were heightened by the publication of a devastating photo of Oscar Martinez and his 23-month old daughter Angie Valeria who drowned in the Rio Grande Valley attempting to seek asylum in the United States. In response to this image, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Bishop Joe Vasquez of Austin, chairman of the UCSSB Committee on Migration, released a joint statement calling on the federal government to hear the cry of migrants. Their statement calls us to prayer and action:

“We join with our Holy Father Pope Francis in immense sadness, having seen the horrific images of Oscar Martinez and his daughter Angie Valeria who drowned in the Rio Grande Valley while attempting to flee persecution and enter the United States. This image cries to heaven for justice. This image silences politics. Who can look on this picture and not see the results of the failures of all of us to find a humane and just solution to the immigration crisis? Sadly, this picture shows the daily plight of our brothers and sisters. Not only does their cry reach heaven. It reaches us. And it must now reach our federal government.”

All people, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, are made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity and respect. Recent reports of overcrowded and unsanitary conditions are appalling and unacceptable for any person in U.S. custody, but particularly for children, who are uniquely vulnerable. Such conditions cannot be used as tools of deterrence. We can and must remain a country that provides refuge for children and families fleeing violence, persecution, and acute poverty.

Congress has a duty to provide additional funding to address the needs of children in federal custody. Their supplemental appropriations bill should also increase protections for immigrant children, including heightened standards and oversight for border facilities. It is possible and necessary to care for the safety of migrant children and the security of our citizens. By putting aside partisan interests, a nation as great as ours is able to do both.”

UNDERSTANDING TWO KEY CAUSES OF THE IMMIGRATION CRISIS

There are two new policies that have significantly worsened the situations that asylum seekers face when they attempt to cross the border: the “Remain in Mexico” policy and the “Turnbacks” (Metering) practice. The Ignatian Solidarity Network, together with the Kino Border Initiative and the Jesuit Conference Office of Justice and Ecology, have published two helpful one-pagers on both policies:

- ***Turnbacks or Metering:*** For the last year, Customs and Border Protection has systematically turned back people fleeing violence at dozens of ports of entry along the U.S.-Mexico border. They claim that there isn’t time or space to process them, although the data show that in almost every port of entry Customs and Border Protection has been detaining fewer individuals than in previous years. Internal documents from Customs and Border Protection show that the U.S. government in fact uses turn backs to discourage people from seeking asylum.
- ***Remain in Mexico:*** Starting at the end of January 2019, the U.S. government implemented Remain in Mexico. Under that policy, instead of living in the U.S. with relatives, friends, and churches eager to support them as they go through the asylum process, people who have fled violence in Central America are forcibly returned to Mexico and stranded for months or years with essentially no way to care for themselves while they wait for their immigration court hearings in U.S. border cities and await judges’ decisions





ACTION ALERT TO UPHOLD THE DIGNITY OF THOSE SEEKING ASYLUM

Voices from the Catholic network, including the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), are speaking out, demanding safety and security for asylum seekers and all immigrants. Join these voices and take action today by [linking right here—sending a message to Congress calling for the protection of those seeking asylum at our border](#). [Your message will urge Congress to:](#)

- Provide CBP with funds to safeguard the dignity of asylum seekers, especially children, in federal detention centers—while prohibiting funding that puts asylum seekers at risk;
- End the “Remain in Mexico” policy and allow asylum seekers the opportunity to wait in the U.S. for the adjudication of their asylum claims;
- Ensure that those seeking asylum can present themselves at the U.S.-Mexico border without delays related to turnbacks (metering) that leave them in harm’s way in Mexico;
- Reduce funding for ICE that would be utilized to target immigrant families and communities;
- Continue to work for humane comprehensive legislation that fully affirms the inherent dignity of migrants to our country.

NEW ORLEANS IGNATIAN VOLUNTEER CORPS REGION BEGINS JULY 1

New Orleans has been approved as an official Ignatian Volunteer Corps region. IVC President and Chief Executive Officer Mary McGinnity, wrote June 26, “The board voted to approve our recommendation with enthusiasm and a dedication to supporting the success of the IVC service corps mission in your community.” Lisa Schillace has been hired by the Ignatian Volunteer Corps National Office as the first New Orleans regional director. The province provided a small social grant to hire Lisa to lead a core team in conducting and presenting a feasibility study to the IVC National Board. Every Jesuit apostolate and Jesuit community in New Orleans has collaborated in the organizing phase of IVC, making it a strongly supported and long-awaited Ignatian ministry!