



Compassion

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

December 2018

Pastoral Letter Against Racism

In their new pastoral letter against racism, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, the Catholic bishops of the United States invite conversion of hearts, minds and institutions in order to address the evil of racism that still exists in our communities. The entire document can be found [here](#). The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Office of Education and Outreach has developed [education-based resources for grades K-12](#), [higher education](#) and [parish based resources](#), including a bulletin insert, a pastoral aid for the first Sunday in Advent, prayers of the faithful, scripture reflections and a series of [backgrounders](#). These resources give ample opportunity for communities to unite in response to the call of the pastoral letter, find conversion in our hearts, and educate ourselves and our children about God's love for each of us. This demands dignity for each person, regardless of their race, identity or gender.

Bishop George Murry, SJ, Addresses Racism

At the recent Ignatian Family Teach-In, Bishop George Murry, SJ, the former chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism, gave a moving [keynote address](#) on the sin of racism to nearly 2,000 participants gathered in Washington, D.C. He began the 30-minute address by saying, "*We need to have an adult conversation about a very important issue – the issue of racism, an issue which has persisted in our society and unfortunately has persisted in our church.*" He spoke directly to the Ignatian family – please take half an hour to listen to his important message!

Environmental Action Alert to Protect the Unborn and Children

Congress is currently considering a rollback in the Mercury and Air Standards rule that could seriously impact the unborn and small children. The burning of coal, oil and wood as fuel can release mercury into the atmosphere. This, in turn, can fall to the ground and pollute rivers and streams. In the United States, power plants that burn coal to generate electricity account for about 42 percent of all manmade mercury emissions. [Mercury is a neurotoxin](#) that adversely affects unborn infants' growing brains and

nervous systems. Exposing children to methylmercury while they are in the womb can impair their cognitive thinking, memory, attention, language and fine motor skills.

In 2011, [the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) estimated that the Mercury and Air Toxics Standards \(MATS\) rule helped to avert 11,000 premature deaths every year and prevented 130,000 asthma attacks and 4,700 heart attacks, while saving up to \\$90 billion annually in human health costs, yet costing utilities only \\$9.6 billion a year.](#) In August, the Trump administration announced it was reviewing the plan and is preparing to gut the rule, which could result in a dramatic rise in these harmful emissions and damage the nervous systems of children and fetuses. In 2011, the [USCCB wrote](#) "a new national standard to reduce mercury and toxic air pollution from power plants is an important step forward to protect the health of all people, especially unborn babies and young children, from harmful exposure to dangerous air pollutants."

The Catholic Climate Covenant is asking people to contact their senators and representatives to urge them to speak out in opposition to the rollback in the Mercury and Air Standards rule. It's easy to do that [here](#).

Jesuit Refugee Services Action Alert to Oppose the Presidential Proclamation on Asylum Seekers

On November 9, President Trump signed a Presidential Proclamation banning the entrance of migrants between designated ports of entry, denying them their full right to seek asylum in the United States along the southern border. The Departments of Justice and Homeland Security have issued a new joint rule ensuring migrants subject to the Proclamation are ineligible for asylum in the U.S. It is not a crime to seek asylum at a border or other port of entry. The right to petition for asylum is firmly established in both the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act and international law as a critical means of protection. The U.S. must continue serving as a beacon of hope for those arriving at our border and guarantee their right to seek protection.

[Please take a moment today to send a letter to the Administration and your policymakers urging them to oppose this Presidential Proclamation and advocate for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.](#)

Pledge to Stand with Asylum Seekers

The past few weeks have been filled with stories of children, women and men fleeing violence and dire situations in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala, and beginning an arduous trek northward to seek safety and refuge in the U.S. as asylum seekers. While those making this long journey have recently received much media coverage and political attention, people have been forced to do so for many years. As people of faith, we are called to promote a culture of hospitality and welcome to those in need. While many seek to demonize people currently on this migrant path, we must stand for a culture of hospitality and welcome those who are most vulnerable.

In the wake of ongoing efforts by the Trump administration to make it more difficult or impossible for people to seek asylum in the U.S. (see previous article), the Ignatian Solidarity Network urges us to pledge to stand with asylum seekers who come to our border.

The Pledge:

As a person of faith,

I believe that all people have inherent dignity.

I affirm that all people have a right to migrate for their safety and livelihood.

I reject the demonization of people who are migrating.

I pledge to stand in solidarity with those seeking refuge in my country by:

- **Being a Voice of Truth and Compassion:** By speaking the truth about our human family fleeing danger and rejecting untruthful and xenophobic statements that misrepresent those who migrate;
- **Accompanying and Supporting:** By physically accompanying those who are seeking safety in the United States at the border or in my local community AND/OR supporting the people in my community and at the border who are accompanying asylum seekers;
- **Taking Action and Advocating:** Taking action to hold elected leaders accountable — calling on them to lift up people's inherent dignity through policies and government actions that will protect people from violence, repression, and extreme poverty.

Take the Pledge



An Advent Prayer for MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

Compassionate God, make your loving presence felt to refugees and migrants, torn from home, family and everything familiar.

Warm them, especially, the hearts of the young, the old, and the most vulnerable among them.

Help them know that you accompany them

as you accompanied Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their exile to Egypt.

Lead refugees and migrants to a new home and a new hope,

as you led the Holy Family to their new home in Nazareth.

Open our hearts to receive them as our sisters and brothers in whose face we see your son, Jesus. Amen.

(Source: http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/prs/stign/arrupe.htm)