

# Archbishop Lori shows support for young immigrants facing possible deportation

**By Kevin J. Parks and George P. Matysek Jr.**

In a show of support for young undocumented immigrants who could face deportation if the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program is eliminated, Archbishop William E. Lori celebrated a Mass in Spanish at St. Patrick in Fells Point Sept. 13, assuring the immigrant community he stands with them.

“As Catholics and people of faith,” the archbishop said in Spanish at the end of the liturgy, “we are called to defend life at every stage, and the lives of these young people are being unnecessarily put at risk by the threat of deportation and separation from the only country many of them have ever known, as well as separation from family, friends, jobs, schools and their livelihood.”

The archbishop’s words were met with applause by approximately 100 people who attended the Mass.

Begun by President Barack Obama in 2012, DACA allows some 800,000 people brought to the United States illegally as children to stay in the country and work or go to school. The Trump administration announced Sept. 5 the program would end in six months if Congress does not pass legislation to make the program permanent.

On the same day Archbishop Lori met with young immigrants, also known as “Dreamers,” Trump met with Democratic leaders Sen. Chuck Schumer and Rep. Nancy Pelosi and was said to be negotiating a deal to make the DACA program permanent.

At St. Patrick, a mission church of Sacred Heart of Jesus- *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* in Highlandtown, Archbishop Lori warned that an end to DACA would deny young people a life of opportunity and deprive the country of their talents.

"I join my brother bishops in imploring the administration to show mercy and compassion for those seeking refuge," he said, "and to advance the American value of freedom through providing safe harbor to those fleeing tyranny and religious persecution."

Doing the contrary "goes against our American values," the archbishop said, "but most importantly, against our Christian values."

Fatima Turcios, a 29-year-old mother of a young daughter, said she attended the liturgy because she knows how the immigrant community is suffering from fear.

"It's heartbreaking to see in the faces of the people who are affected by this decision (to possibly end DACA)," she said through a translator following the Mass. "It's heartbreaking to know that their dreams are cut short, that they are now in danger of being deported."

An immigrant from El Salvador who has lived in the United States for a decade, Turcios recently returned to her home country for a visit. She was shocked by how different it was.

"I put myself in the position of Dreamers going back to a country they might not know," she said. "I can sympathize with that fear of being taken back to a country you no longer know."

In his homily, Redemptorist Father Bruce Lewandowski, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus- *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús*, said fear has paralyzed many of his parishioners and the immigrant community.

"I've heard stories of kids who stay awake all night crying because they fear their parents won't be there in the morning," he said. "Or they don't want to go to school because they fear their family won't be there when they come back."

Others don't report crimes, he said, because they are afraid of deportation.

The priest's message to his flock was to not be afraid.

"With God, all things are possible," Father Lewandowski said. "Because through this

community, he can make great changes. He can produce an incredible transformation.”

The church must be a refuge for immigrants, he added.

“We must be a light for them in these times of darkness, these times of racism, deportation, condemnation,” he said. “Immigration reform can be just and comprehensive. It can respect the concept of family and it can follow the dreams of the Dreamers.”

José Rojas, a 21-year-old student at Baltimore City Community College and an immigrant from El Salvador, said he appreciated the archbishop’s presence at the Mass.

“For me, it is comforting to have his support and unite us as a community in the Eucharist,” said Rojas, who lamented that one of his friends was recently deported. “Activities like this do benefit the community.”

*Read the archbishop’s full comments [here](#).*

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