

Archbishop Lori writes letter concerning executive orders on immigration

The following is a letter written by Baltimore Archbishop William E. Lori concerning President Donald Trump's recent executive orders on immigration.

Jan. 30, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

In recent days, President Donald Trump signed a number of executive orders that have caused many of our immigrant sisters and brothers to fear for their future in this country and for the stability of their families, including one order that suspends the U.S. refugee admissions program. In addition, the orders call for the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, the expedited deportation of those who are living in our country without authorization, and the barring of entry of citizens from a number of countries of particular concern (all Muslim majority).

I echo the concerns expressed by many of my brother bishops across the United States, including Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Texas, Chairman of the Committee on Migration for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, who wrote, "We believe that now more than ever, welcoming newcomers and refugees is an act of love and hope." Citing the Conference's desire to work with the new administration, Bishop Vásquez added, "We will work vigorously to ensure that refugees are humanely welcomed in collaboration with Catholic Charities without sacrificing our security or our core values as Americans, and to ensure that families may be reunified with their loved ones."

While we affirm the right of sovereign nations to control their borders, we likewise affirm our moral responsibility to respect every human being's dignity. We must remember that those fleeing horrendous and unspeakable violence and grinding poverty have the right, as children of God, to provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families. Scripture reminds us repeatedly of our obligation to care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger. "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt." (Lev. 19:34)

Our faith compels us to work for the dignity and justice of all people. For more than 50 years, Catholic Charities' Esperanza Center in Baltimore has been a provider of

services and compassionate care for recent immigrants to our community. Among its many services, the Esperanza Center offers primary and preventive health care for people who have no other place to go, provides classes in English, computer literacy and citizenship and has provided immigration legal services that has reunited hundreds of families. Over the last year alone, Esperanza Center served individuals from 100 countries on five continents.

Oscar, a teenager who fled his home country due to violence, shared how his life changed with the help he received from the Esperanza Center. "With the attorney they offered, I was able to obtain my legal status. Finally, I am not living with fear that I will be rejected from jobs just because of not having a legal status," he said. "I'm doing well because now I know a little bit of English. It's an opportunity to learn the culture of this country, which is a wonderful country, and here I have many opportunities to overcome my situation and keep moving forward."

Essadiya, a Moroccan immigrant who arrived in the U.S. through a fiancé visa, found the Esperanza Center after her new husband severely beat and abused her. "At that moment," she said, "my will was depleted, but the people here were kind and gave me hope. Now, I feel transformed. I can see my life changing day by day." Today, Essadiya has a green card, a job and a home of her own. She is planning to study nursing.

These are but two people among thousands who are served at the Esperanza Center each year. The Immigration Legal Services department is experiencing an increased need for assistance and needs pro bono attorneys who can volunteer their time and efforts to assist these new immigrants. Please call 667-600-2931 for more information.

I invite you to join me in praying for our Nation's leaders, for the people who call this country their home, including our immigrant sisters and brothers, and for the United States of America.

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori

Archbishop of Baltimore