

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Administrative Committee issues statement on Migrants and Refugees

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Administrative Committee has issued the following statement on migrants and refugees. The Administrative Committee is led by the president of the Conference and is comprised of the USCCB's officers, chairmen of the Conference's standing committees, as well as a representative from each episcopal region of the United States. The committee operates as the board of directors of the Conference.

The committee's full statement follows:

The issues of refugees, migration, and forced displacement of people are not new ones, and there are many countries facing these challenges. Across the globe, families have been forced to flee their homes in search of safety and security. War, violence, racial strife, corruption and political instability, natural disasters, and poverty: these all still remain major factors in the lives of so many, which is why the numbers of people on the move, refugees, and people being displaced are at historically high levels.

As Christians, the words of Jesus must always shape how we think and how we act. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this when writing to the Philippians: *Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus (2:5).*

Some may question why and how the Church supports refugees and migrants, regardless of race, creed, or color, but the simple truth is that Christ identifies with those in need: *For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me (Mt 25:35).*

This means that when people are hungry and knock at our door, we feed them. When they come to our door cold, we clothe them. And when someone who is a stranger comes, we welcome him or her. The Church does this everywhere she exists. We do this because this is what Christ calls us to do. In the United States, much of the Church's care for and ministry to refugees and migrants can be seen in the longstanding dedication and hard work of our Catholic Charities agencies.

The Conference has spoken time and again about the call to welcome and protect the newcomer. What is clearly true, and what the Church and many others have called for, is the urgent need for a comprehensive reform of our country's immigration system. The U.S. immigration system is

overly complex and unjust, often keeping family members apart; it must be fixed. The Church does teach that a country has the right to regulate its borders. At the same time, people have the fundamental right to migrate in order to preserve their lives and families.

What must always be in the forefront of our thoughts and actions is the fact that each and every person, including the newcomer, is a brother or sister to us all and a blessing to welcoming communities when given the opportunity to integrate. We must acknowledge not only the inherent dignity of immigrants but also embrace their contributions and potential.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, let us embrace the ministry given to us by Jesus and reject the contemporary forces of division that tempt us with a false choice between our security and our humanity. Our great nation is capable of safeguarding both our humanity and our security.