



School Sisters of Notre Dame

Atlantic-Midwest Province

Statement regarding the respectful and humane treatment of asylum seekers

The Atlantic-Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame stands in solidarity with the people of the migrant “caravan,” who are fleeing extreme violence and seeking refuge in the United States. In accord with our Corporate Stance on Immigration, we support “effective and humane border security that recognizes the human rights of all people.” We reject the Trump Administration’s degradation of these human beings – our sisters and brothers – which has ranged from unfounded and fear-inducing rhetoric, to violating international and U.S. law by refusing to process the claims of those who cross the border before applying for asylum. The people traveling in the “caravan” and being forced to stay in overcrowded and unsanitary complexes while they wait for a chance to begin the application process for asylum are escaping unstable and often extremely unsafe conditions caused by government corruption, droughts and floods linked to climate change, pervasive gang violence, and domestic violence. They are migrating because it is their right under international law to seek asylum in any country in which they feel safe, and they travel to the United States because it is a beacon of hope.

We call on all U.S. citizens to remember that we are a nation built by immigrants, with a rich history of providing refuge to those in need, and to uphold those American ideals today. As Christians, we are commanded to love our neighbors, which includes welcoming the stranger. As SSNDs, “Our history is inextricably connected to the immigrant experience” (AMSSND Corporate Stance). We believe that the United States will be stronger and safer when we welcome those who seek refuge at our borders. Not only are the men, women, and children in the “caravan” people who reflect the image of God in unique and unrepeatable ways; they also are people who can contribute to our nation’s rich cultural heritage and economic initiatives.

Thus, with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, we urge the administration to manage refugee arrivals humanely and in a manner that respects their dignity and rights under U.S. and international law, and to:

- Allow migrants to approach our border and ask for protection in the United States and to be admitted for processing in a timely manner.
- Ensure that asylum seekers have access to legal counsel and receive a fair resolution of their claim.
- Guarantee that parents and children stay together after they are apprehended. Holding families indefinitely in detention or detaining parents while releasing their children violates the values of this nation and the standards set forth in the Flores settlement.
- Eschew detention of those awaiting adjudication of their asylum petitions in favor of alternatives that are more humane and more cost efficient.

- Direct Homeland Security to cooperate with faith-based and humanitarian organizations who are prepared to assist asylum-seekers.

The United States has a long and proud history of welcoming immigrants and sheltering refugees. Women religious have been blessed to be able to accompany and serve migrant communities across this country for a very long time – as SSNDs, “Our striving for unity embraces all humanity and the whole of creation” (YAS C 9). We will continue to welcome immigrants as our national history demands and our faith requires.