

**Opinion: Affirming Our Faith and American Tradition**  
**By Ted Bergh, CEO Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio**

Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio urges government leaders to continue the American tradition of welcoming immigrants and refugees. This reflects Catholic Social Teaching that guides our efforts to always act for the common good and with respect for the human dignity of all men and women.

Catholic Charities has resettled 12,000 refugees over the last 40 years through federal programs under multiple administrations from both political parties. Catholic Charities also works with immigrants from Central America who are fleeing oppression and poverty and seek legal immigration status consistent with US immigration laws. Immigrants have built Cincinnati and Catholic Charities has worked with refugees and immigrants for most of its 100-year history.

In this Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis as an expression of God's mercy to the poor and vulnerable, we recall the Holy Father's words spoken in St. Peter's Square on October 26, 2016.

*"Today too we need these witnesses so that mercy may reach the many who are in need. It is a commitment that involves everyone, without exception. We all, dioceses, parishes, institutes of consecrated life, associations and movements, as individual Christians, are called to welcome our brothers and sisters who are fleeing from war, from hunger, from violence and from inhuman living conditions. All together we are a great supportive force for those who have lost their homeland, family, work and dignity."*

Throughout recorded history there have been movements of people caused by disasters, wars and crop failures. In the Hebrew scripture, Jacob's family relocates to Egypt in a time of famine. The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph became refugees in Egypt after fleeing the persecution by King Herod. The world is facing its largest refugee crisis since World War II and this humanitarian crisis requires that we uphold cherished American values and our faith. We look to Pope Francis for guidance:

*"Today, the context of the economic crisis unfortunately fosters the emergence of attitudes of closure and not of welcome. In some parts of the world walls and barriers are going up. At times it seems that the silent work of so many men and women who, in various ways, do all they can to help and assist the refugees and migrants, is obscured by the clamor of others who give voice to an instinctive selfishness. However, closure is not a solution, but instead it ends up fostering criminal trafficking. The only way to a solution is that of solidarity. Solidarity with the migrant, solidarity with the foreigner...."*

It is our intention to act in solidarity with the migrant and the refugee to welcome the stranger, serve the poor and protect the vulnerable as Jesus taught us through the Gospel. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the man is neighbor to the victim of robbers who is a different religion and ethnicity. We ask people of good will to join us in working with all who struggle for a better life regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity and respect the human dignity of all as a long-standing American tradition. Show your support, by supporting this work at [www.ccswoh.org/donate](http://www.ccswoh.org/donate).