

## **Statement Concerning Maribel Trujillo's Deportation and a Renewed Call for Immigration Reform and More Targeted Enforcement**

**April 19, 2017**

We learned that Maribel Trujillo Diaz of Fairfield, Ohio was deported to Mexico today from a detention facility in Louisiana at 10am this morning. As she is sent away from her husband and four, U.S. citizen children, our prayers go with her. May God keep her safe from all dangers and comforted in His unyielding love. Our prayers also go out to her family left behind, who are embraced by the supportive community of their St. Julie Billiart Parish. May God give them the strength to make it through these times of absence to that day when their family may be made whole again.

We give thanks to U.S. Senators Sherrod Brown and Rob Portman, Governor John Kasich, her attorneys at Advocates for Basic Legal Equality, and CLINIC for their work. We are also grateful for the thousands of Catholic faithful, those of other faiths, and all whose hearts were moved by this sad situation who offered their prayers and took action. The outpouring of so many people illustrates the limitless value of one human family and a resolve to see our immigration laws work better for all migrants who wish to contribute to the common good. Yet despite everyone's concerted efforts, our pleas for mercy have run into a brick wall.

We affirm the rule of law, and all of us seek to live in a land of justice. However, none of us wants to live in a society that also does not practice mercy at the appropriate time and for someone who poses no threat to public safety. When the practice of justice harms a family and contradicts the will and well-being of a community, then justice can rightly be tempered with mercy. In a letter to Congress sent just earlier this month, all the Catholic bishops of Ohio recognized:

*Ohio does not benefit from separating good families and traumatizing children... In these instances, justice should be sought, but the punishment should be commensurate with serving the good of the family unit, which is the fundamental cell of all society. (Letter Encouraging Legislative Support for Immigrants and Refugees, Catholic Bishops of Ohio, April 2017)*

Although the Trump Administration has said that it would focus on real criminals and dangers, its unrelenting insistence to remove Maribel suggests that no such priority exists. Furthermore, the way that Immigrations and Customs Enforcement surprised Maribel by taking her into custody near her home just two days after she had been told she could stay until her next check-in appointment in May, was cruel and misleading. Hence, we are also deeply concerned that other such immigrant families and asylum seekers may meet the same fate as Maribel, and we urge the Administration to now seriously reconsider its approach and handling of these situations in the future.

Finally, we take this opportunity today to renew our call to Congress to do what it should have done decades ago: update our immigration laws so that they provide more legal avenues to enter the United States for those like Maribel. For all immigrant families in fear on this day and the communities enriched by their presence, it is Congress' moral obligation to ensure that no more situations like Maribel's happen again.