

**Archdiocese of Cincinnati Statement for Mayor's Press Conference**  
**January 30, 2017**  
**Tony Stieritz, Director, Catholic Social Action**

On behalf of Archbishop Dennis Schnurr, thank you, Mayor Cranley, and thank you, everyone gathered here today.

The Catholic Church in the United States has for some time advocated for a comprehensive immigration reform as the true solution to our broken immigration system. We will continue to urge our elected officials to fix the existing law, which provides too few paths for legal immigration into our great land. Enforcement-only measures, absent a larger vision for true reform, only serve to exacerbate the problems of a broken system and drive immigrants fearfully underground.

We do not wish to circumvent laws; we want to change laws. Yet, there are also productive and un-productive ways to enforce laws, so that they truly do improve national security and respect the lives and dignities of immigrants. As for the administration's declarations to expand enforcement activities internally, we do not believe that making more undocumented immigrants as much of a target for deportation as actual criminals improves our safety. Rather, in our experience, it drives more immigrants underground, dissuades them from reporting crimes, and leads to the separation of good families who pray in our churches, learn in our schools, and participate in so many of our other ministries.

Regarding executive orders on the refugee program, all the Catholic bishops of Ohio released a statement one year ago when similar concerns were raised at that time. They stated:

*We well understand the need to balance the safety of society with the human needs of extremely vulnerable persons and families. Terrorism is a real threat... Our country must be vigilant in examining and revising security measures. At the same time, our country should maintain its resettlement programs in order to welcome and aid those men, women, and children who are in desperate need and who have been extensively vetted by procedures that have been carefully reviewed and implemented.*

This includes those refugees fleeing persecution in Syria, who are now indefinitely barred from coming here until further notice.

Regarding the resettlement of religious minorities over other refugees, we have always supported the resettlement of such minorities, whether they be Christian, Muslim or from another community. Yet, as Bishop Joe Vasquez, Chair of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Migration Committee stated,

*We need to protect all our brothers and sisters of all faiths who have lost family, home, and country. They are children of God and are entitled to be treated with human dignity. We believe that by helping to resettle the most vulnerable, we are living out our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do.*

The local Catholic Church will continue to advocate with our elected officials for comprehensive immigration reform. And we will work with our local officials, such as those from the City of Cincinnati, to advance policies that welcome all those migrants who contribute to the social and spiritual make-up of our community.

Thank you.