

Statement on Refugees and Immigrants

The human dignity of refugees and immigrants should be the central consideration in any approach to the issues they present.

During my annual question and answer session with Catholic high school students from around the Archdiocese yesterday, one of the students showed me a photograph of a Syrian refugee family she knows through her parish. She told me in some detail of their efforts to adjust to a new life in Cincinnati. This brought home to me in a very moving way the reality of refugees: They are people who have left behind their homes, their language, their friends, and perhaps some of their family in order merely to survive. They are fleeing life and death situations, based on religious, political or racial persecution. No one would make such sacrifices unless they had to. Catholic teaching recognizes that any just immigration system should provide a special path to welcome refuge to such victims after proper vetting by the U.S. government. Catholic Charities is proud to be involved in refugee resettlement.

Addressing the flow of regular immigration poses a different challenge. Human beings have a right to migrate for a better life. But, at the same time, every country has a right to secure borders. That is Catholic teaching. A just immigration system must strike a balance between those two rights. Our current system fails to do so, especially for so many immigrants also trying to escape violence and poverty in their homelands. The Catholic bishops of the United States have long said that we need comprehensive immigration reform, which could include additional enforcement measures as long as they are coupled with more paths to legal residency. Until that happens, we do not advocate disregarding the current law; we advocate fixing it. However, enforcement should be prioritized against those who have committed criminal acts, rather than separating otherwise law-abiding families.

*Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati
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<http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/archbishop-dennis-schnurrs-statement-on-refugees-and-immigrants/38754>

<http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/archdiocese-of-cincinnati-statement-for-mayors-press-conference/38692>

<http://www.thecatholictelegraph.com/catholic-charities-of-southwestern-ohio-statement-on-refugees/38696>