



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

January 30, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

In recent days, President Donald Trump signed a number of sweeping executive orders that have caused many of our immigrant sisters and brothers to fear for their future in this country and for the stability of their families. The orders relate to the construction of a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and the expedited deportation of those who are living in our country without authorization.

As a result of these actions, many families are facing an agonizing decision of whether to leave behind their children who are U.S. citizens or to uproot their lives to return to the violent and impoverished home countries of their parents, who fled to the United States to make a better life for themselves and their children.

Further, these actions will put immigrant lives needlessly in harm's way. In a January 25 letter issued by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin wrote, "Construction of such a wall will only make migrants, especially vulnerable women and children, more susceptible to traffickers and smugglers...Instead of building walls, at this time, my brother bishops and I will continue to follow the example of Pope Francis. We will 'look to building bridges between people, bridges that allow us to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation.'"

While we affirm the right of sovereign nations to control their borders, we likewise affirm our moral responsibility to respect every human being's dignity. We must remember that those fleeing horrendous and unspeakable violence and grinding poverty have the right, as children of God, to provide for the basic needs of themselves and their families. Scripture reminds us repeatedly of our obligation to care for the widow, the orphan and the stranger. "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt." (Lev. 19:34)

Our faith compels us to work for the dignity and justice of all people. For more than 50 years, Catholic Charities' Esperanza Center in Baltimore has been a provider of services and

compassionate care for recent immigrants to our community. Among its many services, the Esperanza Center offers primary and preventive health care for people who have no other place to go, provides classes in English, computer literacy and citizenship and has provided immigration legal services that has reunited hundreds of families. Over the last year alone, Esperanza Center served individuals from 100 countries on five continents.

Oscar, a teenager who fled his home country due to violence, shared how his life changed with the help he received from the Esperanza Center. "With the attorney they offered, I was able to obtain my legal status. Finally, I am not living with fear that I will be rejected from jobs just because of not having a legal status," he said. "I'm doing well because now I know a little bit of English. It's an opportunity to learn the culture of this country, which is a wonderful country, and here I have many opportunities to overcome my situation and keep moving forward."

Essadiya, a Moroccan immigrant who arrived in the U.S. through a fiancé visa, found the Esperanza Center after her new husband severely beat and abused her. "At that moment," she said, "my will was depleted, but the people here were kind and gave me hope. Now, I feel transformed. I can see my life changing day by day." Today, Essadiya has a green card, a job and a home of her own. She is planning to study nursing.

These are but two people among thousands who are served at the Esperanza Center each year. The Immigration Legal Services department is experiencing an increased need for assistance and needs pro bono attorneys who can volunteer their time and efforts to assist these new immigrants. Please call 667-600-2931 for more information.

I invite you to join me in praying for our Nation's leaders, for the people who call this country their home, including our immigrant sisters and brothers, and for the United States of America.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore