Living as a People of God in Unsettled Times

A pastoral reflection from the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

March 21, 2017

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Administrative Committee has issued the following pastoral reflection in solidarity with those who have been forced to flee their homes due to violence, conflict or fear in their native lands. In the statement, the bishops encourage each of us to do what we can to accompany migrants and refugees who seek a better life in the United States.

The full text of the Bishops' Administrative Committee statement can be found below:

> "The word of God is truly alive today. "When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. 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. 19:33-34).
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> To live as a people of God is to live in the hope of the resurrection. To live in Christ is to draw upon the limitless love of Jesus to fortify us against the temptation of fear. Pray that our engagement in the debate over immigration and refugee issues may bring peace and comfort to those most affected by current and proposed national policy changes.
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> Let us not lose sight of the fact that behind every policy is the story of a person in search of a better life. They may be an immigrant or refugee family sacrificing so that their children might have a brighter future. As shepherds of a pilgrim Church, we will not tire in saying to families who have the courage to set out from their despair onto the road of hope: "We are with you." They may also be a family seeking security from an increased threat of extremist violence. It is necessary to safeguard the United States in a manner that does not cause us to lose our humanity.
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> Intense debate is essential to healthy democracy, but the rhetoric of fear does not serve us well. When we look at one another do we see with the heart of Jesus? Within our

diverse backgrounds are found common dreams for our children. Hope in the next generation is how the nation will realize its founding motto, "out of many, one." In doing so, we will also realize God's hope for all His children: that we would see each other as valued sisters and brothers regardless of race, religion or national origin.

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh (Jn. 1:14), strengthens us to bring our words to life. How might we, as Catholics and in our own small way, bring our words of solidarity for migrants and refugees to life?

1. **Pray** for an end to the root causes of violent hatred that force mothers and fathers to flee the only home they may have known in search of economic and physical security for their children.

2. **Meet** with members of your parish who are newcomers, listen to their story and share your own. Hundreds of Catholic parishes across the country have programs for immigrants and refugees both to comfort them and to help them know their rights. It is also important to reach out in loving dialogue to those who may disagree with us. The more we come to understand each other's concerns the better we can serve one another. Together, we are one body in Christ.

3. **Call**, write or visit your elected representative and ask them to fix our broken immigration system in a way that safeguards both our security and our humanity through a generous opportunity for legal immigration.

   As Pope Francis said, "To migrate is the expression of that inherent desire for the happiness proper to every human being, a happiness that is to be sought and pursued. For us Christians, all human life is an itinerant journey towards our heavenly homeland."

Keywords: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Administrative Committee, USCCB, Pope Francis, immigration, refugees, families, pilgrim Church, extremist violence, democracy, U.S. security, solidarity.

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