



Office of the Bishop
December 12, 2017

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas

Dear Friends in Christ,

As our pilgrim Church journeys through this holy season of Advent towards the great celebration of Christmas, I cannot help but think of the hardships that beset Joseph and Mary as they struggled to bring Christ into the world and provide for his care. Amid their many travails, the Holy Family had to flee as refugees to the land of Egypt right after his birth to escape the murderous designs of King Herod.

In the present moment, we find the sufferings of the Holy Family mirrored in the agony of millions of families forced to flee their homelands. They migrate to elude religious persecution, armed conflict, economic collapse, environmental catastrophes, and other disasters caused by nature or contrived by man. None can forget the heartrending image of the body of Alan Kurdi lying lifeless on the Turkish shore. Alan was a three year old Syrian boy whose family sought refuge from the horrors of their nation's civil war.

Confronted by these hideous realities, the people of God are summoned to prayer and actions that are fired by ardent charity and illumined by the splendid light of the Gospel. In this regard, our Holy Father Pope Francis has guided us with both inspired gestures and inspirational words. He has reaffirmed the longstanding Church teaching on the dignity of all human beings and right to migrate which flows from it. He has reached out with tender compassion to those who have been compelled to flee their native lands. He calls all children of the Church to follow his example.

In this spirit, we do well to recall the time-honored adage, "charity begins at home." This day, December 12, has been declared by the USCCB to be a Day of Solidarity with Immigrants. I ask that all Catholics in our local Church join with me in fervent prayer and dedicated action to protect young people impacted by the Dream Act. The so-called "Dream Act" of 2012 was a failed legislative attempt to rectify the status of these persons. These are immigrants who were brought to our country as minors and who are now in grave danger due to the lack of legal protection. As of March 5, 2018, this class of people will no longer enjoy the safeguards offered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, i.e., DACA. These young people are a gift to our nation: they build up our economy through their labors; they protect our nation in the military; they worship God in our churches. While our nation has both the right and duty to foster its security through prudent immigration laws, we must not attempt to purchase safety at the cost of violating the fundamental dignity of our fellow men and women, many of whom share our faith in Christ.

In addition, as Bishop, I declare that Sunday December 31, 2017, the Feast of the Holy Family, be a day of special prayer for the enactment of just legislation which upholds the rights of Dreamers. To this end, I ask that intentions on behalf of Young People Impacted by the Dream Act be offered at all Masses both on December 31 as well as the anticipated Masses of the previous evening. I also encourage all parishes of our diocese to participate actively in National Migration Week, January 7-13, 2018. Resources to assist in this endeavor may be found at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/take-action/national-migration-week/>.

May the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, assist us in this noble undertaking!

Gratefully yours in Christ,

+ James V. Johnston, Jr.

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
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