

We Are One Body

A Petition for Reform of the Immigration Policies of the United States

“Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43). . .In this regard, I wish to reaffirm that ‘our shared response may be articulated by four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate.’”

-Pope Francis-

“My dream is of a place and a time where America will once again be seen as the last best hope of earth.”

-Abraham Lincoln-

At its birth, the United States declared that the value of a person depends not on rights granted by government, but on inalienable rights granted by the will of the Creator. This principle—tested and refined through civil war and social upheaval—is a north star to our nation’s moral compass, drawing us back when fear or selfishness lead us astray. Today, as we struggle to decide our policy towards those seeking refuge at our border, we are called, as Americans, to look again to the wisdom of the *Declaration* and, as Christians, to the teaching of our faith.

Just as *“inalienable rights”* guided the founders of our nation, so inherent human value guides Catholic Social Teaching, proclaiming that every woman or man has a right to life, and to the human goods by which to maintain family, faith, and freedom. Catholic tradition holds that the goods of the earth exist to foster the common good, the good of reason, by which each person and the whole community are protected. Civil laws must respect not just the will of the majority, but the inherent dignity of every person, who is *“endowed by their Creator”* with a value that cannot be justly compromised by the power of any government. This we believe and affirm, as Catholics, as Christians, and as Americans.

Today, in the name of protecting the sovereignty of our national borders, the US Government is violating both Catholic Social teaching and the fundamental moral principles of this nation. No government has the authority to fracture families, to deny basic rights of counsel to the detained (including children), to indeterminately confine, and to punish those who had no active role in committing the offense of unlawful migration. Such actions violate the inherent dignity of migrants and undermine the principles of justice upon which our country was founded. We, therefore, petition the Congress, in accord with the moral law and as provided for in the *Constitution*, to take immediate action:

- **To reunite all families separated by the Customs Service or by Immigration and Custom Enforcement, even if parents or guardians have been detained or deported.**
- **To provide minors detained by the US government with legal counsel prior to any hearings—either administrative or judicial—on refugee status or immigration.**
- **To provide alternative forms of monitoring, not involving incarceration, for all those detained solely as the result of violations of immigration law, or awaiting hearings on immigration status.**
- **To empower the judiciary to review decisions of the administrative immigration courts (maintained by the executive branch) regarding requests for refugee status based on well-grounded fear.**
- **To provide inspection and government oversight of private for-profit detention facilities.**

These are not easy times, but as women and men of faith, we are filled with a Spirit of hope, and drawn as one body to our displaced brothers and sisters, by the love of God and the example of Christ Jesus. Though the power of oppression seems great, we are not cowed by it; though the walls of fear seem high, we are not overcome. Rather, we stand today in solidarity—one body, one spirit—with our immigrant brothers and sisters. We stand with Christians and Jews, with Muslims and Hindus, with women and men of every spiritual and ethical tradition, who pursue justice for the poor as a moral imperative. We stand with all people of good will, including police officers, customs officers, and agents of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who seek a more just system. To them, especially, we offer our prayer and support, asking them to refuse any order inconsistent with the principles of human rights and moral law. Together, we reject fear, and embrace faith; we call for prayer that leads to action; and we act together as one living body, who seeks justice and hope for every woman and man.

Signature	Print Name	Zip code <small>(for Congressional District)</small>

You may return completed form to St. Joseph Parish, 732 18th Ave. E., Seattle, WA 98112,
or scan and e-mail to jwhitney@stjosephparish.org, or send on your own to Congress. Please invite others to
sign. St. Joseph will send signed copies to all members of Congress, after 25 August.