



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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An Open Letter to the People of Our Community in the Diocese of Syracuse

Yet another headline: *52,000 unaccompanied children caught crossing the border since October.* I read it again and reflect on each word:

52,000...unaccompanied...children...caught...crossing...border. It does not seem to make sense. Questions immediately come to mind. What are the children running from? Where are they running to? Where are their mothers and fathers? How did they ever reach the Border? Why are we just learning about a total of 52,000 unaccompanied children facing this situation? How has it been able to reach this crisis level? How do we address this issue?

At the moment, there are more questions than answers. Without oversimplifying a very complex issue, it is apparent that there are a number of viewpoints. There are those who believe we must immediately send the children back to their countries. Some believe we need immediate immigration reform, others who lobby for stronger Border Patrols, and those who are opposed to using tax dollars to support immigrants, to name just a few. The list of varying opinions is long and the range of emotion connected to this crisis is vast.

In the midst of this debate that will undoubtedly continue over the course of months, one fact remains. We must care for the children. Whether we agree with the method or the circumstance, the fact is that there are 52,000 plus children in our country who are in need right now. As Pope Francis stated in his message to the Mexico-Holy See Colloquium on Human Migration and Development this week, "A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization." He continued by stating "This humanitarian emergency requires, as a first urgent measure, these children be welcomed and protected."

"The Catholic Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances." *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is searching for communities who will welcome the children and in partnership, care for them for a period of time. There is much to learn of the details but it is my fervent hope that the City of Syracuse and other cities within the Diocese of Syracuse will be among the welcoming communities. The Diocese of Syracuse stands at the ready to be one of the supporting partners in this endeavor.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham
Bishop of Syracuse