



June 15th, 2016

Corporate Stance

A corporate stance by the Little Sisters of the Assumption US Territory to support the interfaith platform on humane immigration, refugee, and asylum seeking reform as follows:

As our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion regardless of their place of birth, we call on our President and congress to enact humane and equitable immigration, refugee, and asylum seeking reform in 2016.

We call for reform because each day in our congregation, service programs, health-care facilities and schools, we witness the human consequences of a broken and outdated system. We see the exploitation of undocumented workers and the plight of separated families, as well as the escalation of community fear due to indiscriminate raids and local police acting as federal immigration agents. We hear words of hate that seek to prevent humans from finding safety as they seek to escape desperate situations in economically impoverished and war torn and conflicted regions of the world. Humane immigration, refugee, and asylum policies would help put an end to this suffering which offends the dignity of all human beings.

The Hebrew Bible tells us: *"The strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."* (Leviticus 19:33-34) In the New Testament, Jesus tells us to welcome the stranger, for *"what you did to the least of my brethren, you do unto me"*. (Matthew 25:40) The Qur'an tells us that we should *"do good to...those in need, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer that you meet"*. (4:36) The Hindu Taitiriya Upanishad tells us: *"The guest is a representative of God."* (1.11.2)

Therefore we call on our Government to:

1. **Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies.**
2. **Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship**
3. **Protect Workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers**
4. **Facilitate immigrant integration**
5. **Restore due process protections and reform detention policies**
6. **Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values**
7. **Create humane policies to welcome refugees and asylum seekers**
8. **Uphold Immigration and any instances of migration as a matter of human rights**





1. UPHOLD FAMILY UNITY AS A PRIORITY OF ALL IMMIGRATION POLICIES.

Recognizing the importance of families to the creation of healthy individuals and strong community, we call on the Administration to:

- 1) Expeditiously reunite immigrant families separated due to lengthy visa backlogs;
- 2) Revise family preference categories and per-country caps to prioritize family unity;
- 3) Remove bars to reentry and adjustment of status for individuals seeking to reunite with their family members. Attempts to devalue the family, such as denying birthright citizenship to the children of immigrants or placing family-based and employment-based visa applicants in competition with each other on a point-based or other system, must be rejected in order to maintain and promote family unity.

2. CREATE A PROCESS FOR UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS TO EARN THEIR LEGAL STATUS AND EVENTUAL CITIZENSHIP

We urge Administration and Congress to enact immigration reform that allows undocumented immigrants and their families to earn lawful permanent residency upon the satisfaction of reasonable criteria, with a pathway to citizenship. The workability of such a program should not be hindered by overly punitive criteria, such as mandating that immigrants leave the country or pay exorbitant fees, or by making the process conditional upon the implementation of enforcement measures. Communities and congregations around the country are prepared to provide legal services to those eligible, as people of faith are committed to an effective and humane system that keeps families together and values the dignity of our friends and neighbors.

3. PROTECT WORKERS AND PROVIDE EFFICIENT CHANNELS OF ENTRY FOR NEW MIGRANT WORKERS

We call for an expansion of legal avenues for workers who seek to migrate to the United States to work in a safe, legal, and orderly manner. Their rights must be fully protected, including the ability to bring their families with them, travel as needed, change their place of employment, and apply for lawful permanent residency and eventually citizenship. As currently structured, electronic employment verification programs have proven detrimental to both employers and employees due to increased discrimination and unfair hiring and firing practices. All workers benefit, however, from the enforcement of health, safety, wage, and hour laws, as well as the right to peacefully organize.

4. FACILITATE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Many immigrants desire to naturalize but lack the necessary tools. The U.S. immigration system should empower them to this end by providing financial support to state and local governments and community organizations that offer language and civics education, outreach, and naturalization application assistance. Citizenship should be made more affordable by reducing naturalization fees and making fee waivers more easily accessible. Moreover, the processing of application backlogs and security checks should be streamlined to reduce waiting times. Counterproductive laws prohibiting immigrants from accessing social services and mandating that local police act as immigration officials should be revoked. These barriers to integration decrease community safety and discourage immigrants from pursuing education and community involvement. Faith based organizations and congregations around the country will continue to assist in integration efforts by providing social services and helping immigrants learn English, find jobs, and thrive in the United States.

5. RESTORE DUE PROCESS PROTECTIONS AND REFORM DETENTION POLICIES

Immigration policies should respect human rights and ensure due process for all persons. We have witnessed how indiscriminate immigration raids have caused trauma and hardship for thousands of individuals. Such raids separate families, destroy communities, and threaten the basic rights of immigrants and U.S. citizens alike. The suffering caused by the increase and severity of Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids in homes and workplaces underscores the problems with current U.S. immigration policies and the urgent need for reform.

Many faith organizations administer services to those impacted by raids, as well as to immigrants in detention facilities. Witnessing the toll of incarceration on detainees, their families and our communities, we urge the Administration and Congress to reduce the use of detention for immigrants and improve detention conditions by enacting clear, enforceable reforms that include rigorous medical treatment standards and increased access to pastoral care, legal counsel and legal orientation programs. Furthermore, the government should expedite the release of individuals who pose no risk to the community and expand the use of community-based alternative to detention, which are more humane and cost effective.

6. ALIGN THE ENFORCEMENT OF IMMIGRATION LAWS WITH HUMANITARIAN VALUES

For the past twenty years, the federal government has dramatically increased fence construction, border patrol presence, and the deportation of immigrants, which have proven ineffective at decreasing undocumented immigration. During this time, we have witnessed the desecration of sacred sites and the violation of environmental and religious freedom laws, as well as the unnecessary suffering of community members who's loved ones have suffered or died seeking entry into the United States. Currently, vast resources are being used for fence construction and the mass arrests, detention, and deportation of immigrants who contribute to the U.S. economy and culture. To truly decrease undocumented immigration, the United States should improve access to the legal immigration system by increasing the number of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs to increase processing efficiency. Border policies must be consistent with humanitarian values and with the need to treat all individuals with respect, while allowing the United States to implement its immigration laws and identify and prevent the entry of persons who commit dangerous crimes. All immigration laws must respect the dignity of all persons, prioritize the cohesiveness of families and communities, recognize the economic contributions of immigrants, and uphold our moral obligations to provide refuge and welcome the stranger.

7. CREATE HUMANE POLICIES TO WELCOME REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

There are many global and international conflicts driving individuals to seek formal refugee and asylum status in the U.S. All such efforts and reforms of U.S. policy should recognize that these crisis reflect similar roots of political, economic, and social instability that also push immigrants out of home countries. The political and humanitarian crisis in Syria is a serious concern for the United States. In the past five years, at least four million Syrians have fled their country as a consequence of the civil war and the rise of ISIS. Most have fled to surrounding countries, especially Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, and many others have moved on to Europe with the hope of finding a place of peace and safety. Pope Francis and the Catholic bishops have called on the U.S. government and the international community to provide support to both Syrian refugees fleeing violence and to countries that have been at the forefront of this humanitarian effort. These recommendations include: ending the conflict in Syria and Iraq, building an inclusive and lasting peace to allow Syrian refugees—also including those who are ethnic and religious minorities—to return home and rebuild their countries; providing humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees who have fled to neighboring refugee countries; providing development aid to refugee host countries near Syria so they are able to properly welcome and care for the refugees; providing 100,000 annual resettlement slots for the most vulnerable refugees fleeing the Syria conflict; and designating an additional 100,000 refugees to be resettled in the U.S. from other countries.

8. IMMIGRATION AND MIGRATION: A MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS

As people of faith, we call attention to the moral dimensions of public policy and recommend reforms that uphold the God-given dignity and rights of every person, each of whom are made in the image of God. We are dedicated to immigration, refugee, and asylum seeking policy reform because we value family unity, justice, equity, compassion, love, and the humane treatment of all persons. It is our collective prayer that the Administration and Congress enact just immigration, refugee, and asylum seekers policy reform based on these tenets. All people of good will should express openness and welcome to immigrants and refugees, who are escaping desperate situations in order to survive. Regardless of their religious affiliation or national origin, these immigrants and refugees are all human persons—made in the image of God, bearing inherent dignity, and deserving our respect and care and protection by law from persecution.

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*one heart,
one family*

Little Sisters of the Assumption, US Territory Disappointed in Split Decision on DACA/DAPA Immigration Case

June 29, 2016

The LSA lament the split decision by the U. S. Supreme Court that in effect will continue to delay implementation of President Obama's 2014 executive order that would have offered temporary deportation relief for certain undocumented immigrants who pose a low safety and security threat.

With 6.1 million of U. S. citizens living with a family member in danger of deportation, that leaves countless Americans at risk of becoming impoverished and separated from love ones.

President Obama's order provided temporary relief from deportation and temporary work authorization for undocumented immigrants brought to the U. S. as children. It offered the same provisions to certain undocumented parents of children who are either U. S. citizens or Legal Permanent Residents.

The court's 4-4 decision means the case will return to lower courts, where it could be held up indefinitely. The current injunction against the order's implementation will remain.

The LSA have long protested a practice of deportation of immigrants that tears families and communities apart. The Supreme Court's decision stiffens our resolve to continue to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform legislation that keeps families together and creates a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented Immigrants.

