

Fr. Reutter's letter on DACA and immigration

Archbishop Schnurr has recently asked his pastors to address the controversies over immigration and specifically the “Dreamers.” In response to that request, I am asking you to read this brief letter.

Many of you know that there has been a longstanding controversy over what some people are calling “Dreamers:” those brought to the United States as children, often very young children, when their parents immigrated here illegally.

The sequence of their situation is quite complex, and these young people have unfortunately become something of a political football.

Amidst the heated rhetoric on both sides of this issue, I would like to put this situation in context, so here's a very brief recap:

- In 2012, amidst some strong controversy, then-President Obama implemented DACA, the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, to prevent the deportation of children brought to this country when their parents brought them here in violation of our immigration laws.
- This action was later tied up in courts, and at least in part has been declared unconstitutional by federal judges. That's because Congress, rather than the President, must pass immigration laws. A president can't act unilaterally. For an explanation of this legal question, see <https://www.heritage.org/immigration/commentary/daca-unconstitutional-obama-admitted> (This is written by an organization that opposes DACA, but defines the legal issues at stake).
- President Trump has been working to get Congress to take action on this issue to resolve it. He is not supportive of DACA as it stands. Because of political differences in Congress on an issue that has long divided not only politicians but many Americans, they have not done so.
- Therefore, unless some resolution is reached in Congress, the President is likely to make the decision to follow pre-existing law and instruct his Justice Department to deport the “Dreamers.” This could happen soon if Congress does not come to a resolution quickly.
- It should be noted that this issue of immigration involves what is called a *prudential judgment*. That means that it is not always certain exactly what is just according to Christian teaching in setting immigration policy. The right to migrate is not absolute, because nations do have the right to control immigration for the good of the nation. Still, generosity to the “stranger and alien” is a strong Scriptural principle. Working to keep families together is also highly valued.
- In this sense, the immigration issue is different than such issues as abortion, where there is never any question about justice under the law. The right to life of an innocent child *is* absolute and inviolable, and there is never a case where a nation may justly pass a law allowing one to be killed or making anyone complicit in the process).
- To use the technical language of the Church, abortion is an *inherent* evil (evil by its very nature), while certain restrictions on immigration may sometimes be just and sometimes be unjust.
- That is why Catholic politicians can never support abortion or contraception and still call themselves Catholic, but could nevertheless have varying well-formed opinions on what is just regarding immigration.
- After some deliberation on the question, the U.S. Bishops' hold the opinion that it would be unjust to allow the “Dreamers” to be deported, based on the principles of Catholic teaching that

nations should when reasonably possible be welcoming to migrants and immigrants and to do what is possible to keep families together.

- They are asking Catholics across the country to consider advocating for these children of immigrants soon, because the issue is now coming to a head.
- As noted in the archdiocesan statement below, the bishops have been advocating for Congress to enact a comprehensive reform of our nation's immigration system, to balance our sovereign right and duty to maintaining an orderly and just immigration system with the needs of the vulnerable. However, because of the political timing, the specific questions of the Dreamers must be resolved before the longer and harder work of this reform can be done.
- For more information and instructions on how to contact Congress and for more detail on the situation, please visit website that the Archdiocese has put together including a brief Q&A. www.catholiccincinnati.org/event/national-call-in-day-for-dreamers.