

Dear Friends in Christ,

At times throughout our nation's history, certain events take place that animate the public and force us to ask who we are as an American people. As a community of believers in Christ Jesus, who commanded us to build His Kingdom of love on Earth as it exists in Heaven, we are called to turn to our Catholic values in such moments and play an active role in shaping our culture and civic life. We do so tirelessly on such social concerns as abortion, racism, poverty, religious freedom and more.

Events of this past week provided a galvanizing moment for Catholic Social Teaching. I echo my brother bishops, and Pope Francis himself, in condemning the practices of family separation that were taking place at an unprecedented rate on our nation's southern border. The human family is the most fundamental building block of society. The bonds between parents and children are God's gift for how we begin to experience love itself and God's very presence within humanity. In fact, the family is where we first learn to be human. This is a universal truth that applies to families who have U.S. citizenship, those who were born in other places, and even those who have crossed our borders without permission. Governments at any level exist to serve the structure of the family, not the other way around.

These recent events tested our Catholic Social Teaching on the dignity of the human family and each human person. Thank you for your recent prayers and actions in defense of this principle. We still have grave concerns about what happened and what still may take place. But the public outcry, which included the voices of so many of the Catholic faithful, seems to have halted the immediate crisis of the separation of these families. I am grateful for the strong, united witness of our Catholic faith.

Moving forward, I reiterate the call, one which the U.S. Catholic bishops have proclaimed for decades, for a comprehensive reform of our immigration laws. There is undeniably a need for a greater balance among national security, legal means of entry and humane enforcement of our laws. Congress is currently debating legislation now which the U.S. Catholic bishops oppose, as it would further encumber our immigration system rather than improve it. I encourage all the faithful to urge Congress to fix these problems once and for all through a bipartisan effort of fundamental immigration reform. To learn more, please visit the U.S. bishops' website, www.justiceforimmigrants.org. Direct assistance can be offered through our Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio at www.ccswoh.org.

May we continue to respond to God's call to protect human life, dignity and families everywhere.

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr

Archbishop of Cincinnati