



Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

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January 25, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear President Trump:

We are writing to you as the elected leaders of the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, a community of Roman Catholic Sisters with U.S. regional centers in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey and Bellevue, Washington and in the United Kingdom.

First of all, please be assured that the concerns and issues of our country and our elected leaders are daily in the prayers of our sisters and lay associates. In fact, on inauguration day our community joined in praying a special prayer for the day: "God, bless all newly elected and newly appointed officials. Guide them to consider the sacred inalienable rights of every person as they deliberate and decide on policies and programs that will touch so many lives in these states, which so need to be united again in common purpose."

We are also writing to express our deep concern about some of your actions during this first week of your term of office, in particular plans you ordered today to construct a Mexican border wall, slash our country's program of compassionate refugee settlement for families fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries, and blocking refugees all together from countries experiencing extreme terror and violence and therefore most in need of safe harbor.

Our founder Mother Francis Clare Cusack, herself an immigrant, was moved by the Gospel message to welcome the stranger. At our founding in 1884, we were a Congregation of immigrants, serving immigrants, knowing their pain and suffering.

We are enclosing a copy of our Congregational Statement: Welcome Immigrants and Refugees. This statement is a product of five months of prayer and reflection by our sisters and associates. We invite you to read and reflect on this statement.

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We also urge you to use your position, power, and responsibility as President to end all rhetoric that instills fear, creates division, or incites violence. We also ask that you enact refugee policies which follow international law and expeditiously provide safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers with all rights guaranteed in the U.N. Convention and Protocol on Refugees.

Blessings of Peace,



Sister Sheila Lemieux, CSJP
Congregation Leader



Sister Susan Francois, CSJP
Assistant Congregation Leader



Sister Margaret Shannon, CSJP
Congregation Council Member



Sister Melinda McDonald, CSJP
Congregation Council Member

Enclosure: Welcome Immigrants and Refugees, Congregational Statement

CC: Archbishop Peter Sartain, Archdiocese of Seattle
Cardinal Joseph Tobin, Archdiocese of Newark
Mr. Bill Canny, USCCB Office of Migration
Representative Bill Pascrell, D-NJ
Representative Adam Smith, D-WA
Senator Corey Booker, D-NJ
Senator Maria Cantwell, D-WA
Senator Robert Menezes, D-NJ
Senator Patty Murray, D-Wa



Welcome Immigrants and Refugees

A Congregational Statement of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace

The sisters and associates of the Congregation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace want to express our grave concern for refugees, asylum seekers, and our migrant brothers and sisters. Our Congregation "had its origin in the founder's response to the social concerns and needs of the time." (*Constitution 4*) At our founding, we were a congregation of immigrants, serving immigrants, knowing their pain and suffering.

We believe that we are all brothers and sisters and that everyone has the right to be treated with human dignity. Earth is a gift of our Creator to be shared by all of Earth's families, not just by those who claim to own a piece of it. Nations have the right to control immigration and an obligation to provide safety for citizens, but they do not have the right to close borders to all refugees and asylum seekers who are in need.

Therefore, we urge:

- all governments to follow international law and expeditiously provide safe haven for refugees and asylum seekers with all rights guaranteed in the UN Convention and Protocol on Refugees
- the U.S. and U.K. governments to allow citizens willing to serve refugees the opportunity to offer hospitality as an expression of their faith
- an immediate end to all rhetoric that instills fear, creates division, or incites violence, regardless of the migrant's faith or nation of origin.

As a Congregation committed to peace through justice, we know addressing the present crisis is not enough. To find a truly peaceful resolution we must repent of our own actions and call attention to national policies that are the root causes of forced migration. Among these policies are: the creation of great divergence of wealth among and within nations, our acceptance of war and sales of weapons to nations already in turmoil, our excessive dependence on fossil fuels and the resultant displacement forced by rising seas.

Sister Sheila Lemieux CSJP

Sr. Sheila Lemieux, CSJP, Congregation Leader

Date: June 5, 2016