



DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

McRaith Catholic Center

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 22, 2017

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In recent months, but most especially in recent days, our nation's attention has been focused on the reality of our more than 11.1 million undocumented immigrants. Our new president asserts that following his election, our country is expecting intensified enforcement of immigration laws. Yet, credible polls suggest that most American citizens are not pushing for massive deportations and accelerated enforcement, nor do the majority wish to see the nation's resources invested in a wall between the United States and Mexico.

In this time of uncertainty, all immigrants within our country are feeling vulnerable and frightened. Families are anxious that they may suddenly be separated. As the Roman Catholic Bishop of Owensboro, a diocese covering the western third of the state of Kentucky, I want to speak anew the words of Jesus Christ, *"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me."* (Matthew 25:35)

Our Catholic Churches are houses of prayer and community. As houses of prayer, I extend the invitation that all are welcome to our churches at any time. As houses of community, I want to assure that when anyone comes to our churches, they will be welcomed as Christ. This invitation and assurance is addressed in a special way in this day to immigrants and refugees.

According to the Department for Homeland Security, 8 million of the 11.1 million immigrants are in the labor force. The vast majority are filling jobs that are otherwise difficult to fill in our economy. In other words, they are making vital contributions to our nation's strength. 66% of these have lived peacefully in the U.S. for at least a decade. Millions of them are children and youth.

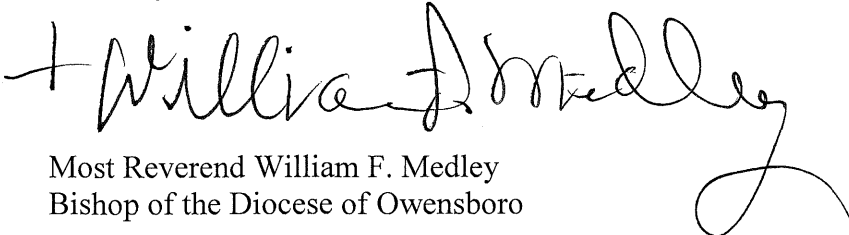
Apart from heightened rhetoric from voices on many sides, the presence of immigrants does not pose a dire threat to our nation. This moment of crisis, though, presents more than one solution. Indiscriminate raids and deportations are only going to inflict more wounds at this time. May we ask our president and members of congress to act now to enact comprehensive immigration reform? For the sake of everyone, can we fix the problem rather than acting in ways that bring harm to children and families, to churches and neighborhoods, and to our nation's economy?

The many issues that are wrapped together as immigration issues are rightly political issues and demand a political resolution. But these are also moral issues and demand a moral resolution. For people who express faith in Jesus Christ, a moral resolution is one rooted in the Gospel: *"What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me."* (Matthew 25:45)

To my sisters and brothers who are undocumented and whose lives seem more perilous now, I assure you that the Catholic Church is your friend and your support. I exhort all in leadership in our parishes, schools, and throughout the diocese to listen and hear the message of Pope Francis that we must accompany all in need. He reminds us: *“Jesus Christ hopes that we always recognize Him in the immigrant and refugee.”*

Let us pray for one another. Let us pray for our nation. Let us pray for the day that all God’s children enjoy the freedom and bounty of His creation.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "William F. Medley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end of the name.

Most Reverend William F. Medley
Bishop of the Diocese of Owensboro