



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017

January 29, 2017

Dear Brother Priest,

Today, I write to you regarding the recent White House executive order which suspended entry into the country of foreign nationals from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Yemen, for 120 days, reduced the number of refugees to be admitted to the United States, indefinitely suspended the resettlement of Syrian refugees, and calls for heightened review procedures for these peoples. A version of the order can be [read here](#).

At this time, the legal situation is still fluid and news reports are sometimes confusing, but in the meantime, real people and real humanitarian concerns are being affected. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a statement on the matter, which [you can review here](#).

My hope is that you might find helpful these additional thoughts. As [I recently noted](#), we are called to care for one another, whether it be our longstanding neighbor down the street, or a newcomer to our nation seeking relief from brutal religious and political persecution. It was earlier this month that our [Holy Father reminded us](#) that “Biblical revelation urges us to welcome the stranger; it tells us that in so doing, we open our doors to God, and that in the faces of others we see the face of Christ himself.”

Here in our Church of Washington, we strive to do just that every day, through our pastoral care, through our many services at the parish level and at Catholic Charities, and in some cases, by simply raising our voices to confirm the dignity of every human life. Last Friday at our Rallies and Masses for Life, and at the March for Life, our voices – our presence – could not be ignored in the defense of the unborn and life at every stage. So too now do we raise our voices in support of all refugees, especially those fleeing religious persecution.

As the federal government pursues any legitimate national security concerns, we hope that it will do so not at the expense of innocent people who are in need, and that it will take all necessary actions to ensure that their safety is protected and that it will expedite all processes to address the need for humanitarian relief.

Through organizations such as the Knights of Columbus and In Defense of Christians, we must continue to make our voices heard, urging the U.S. government to welcome in a particular way Christian refugees, who have been the object of genocide, and all men, women and children fleeing persecution, that they be protected and welcomed after swift but appropriate screening. Through our immigrant and refugee outreach programs, we must continue to serve as a visible sign of God's mercy and our solidarity with our brothers and sisters no matter how far they may have traveled.

The political debate, which is complex and emotionally highly charged, will continue, but we must do our best to remain focused on the pastoral and very real work we undertake every day for the vulnerable and most in need ... for the strangers at our doors.

Asking God's blessing on your ministry, and with every personal good wish, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald Cheadle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Archbishop of Washington