



Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh
111 Boulevard of the Allies
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

E-mail: dioceseofpittsburghcommunications@diopitt.org

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Contact: Fr. Ronald P. Lengwin
412-456-3021

BISHOP ZUBIK'S STATEMENT SUPPORTING IMMIGRATION

The Church in the United States has always welcomed immigrants. Here, in the Church of Pittsburgh, we have been a Church of immigrants since our earliest days. Immigration has defined us and shaped us as a Church, giving flavor and color, strength and beauty to who we are and what we are as Church.

We also know, as Catholics, that not so very long ago our very right to live in this country was questioned. We were described loudly and publicly as potential criminals, lowlifes and poverty-stricken souls interested only in undermining American freedoms. We were hated both for where we came from—particularly Eastern and Southern Europe—and the religion we brought with us. Our Catholicism was not just the target of derision and mockery. It was a source of fear.

Fear. There is so much fear right now. There is too much fear right now. There is so much fear among immigrants. There is too much fear of immigrants. The first victim of fear is rational thought. The second victim is rational policy.

Hasty, thoughtless action hurts people. I know that here in Southwestern Pennsylvania there are immigrants now living in fear. Solid, good people who have already contributed so much to our community. They now fear what will happen next. Happen to themselves. Happen to their families.

To those living in fear, I want you to know that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, the Church of Pittsburgh, and I support you. You have our prayers and our pledge to stand with you, whether you are of our faith, of a different faith or of no faith at all.

We pray that our president and elected leaders will step back and review our current policies for immigration, as well as proposed reforms. American policies have been rooted in compassion and justice. We cannot abandon those virtues now. They define us to the world.

We do have a national responsibility to secure our borders. But our borders do not become more secure by locking out good and desperate people. That engenders only anger and hatred. We will secure our borders when we increase opportunities for legal immigration—with an equitable path to citizenship for undocumented residents—and we enforce our laws in ways that honor due process, the sanctity of the human person and the family as the foundation of our communities.

We so proudly marched last week in defense of human life. We must now stand up for those immigrants and refugees who are looking to come to America. Some of them are quite literally fleeing for their lives. They are coming to America with their eyes on the lit torch of Lady Liberty.

Let's not extinguish that light when the world needs it the most.