

Conference of Major Superiors of Men

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Media Release

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Family Separation is Immoral and Participants Must Desist

As Christians and Catholic religious leaders, our hearts are broken whenever our sisters and brothers suffer injustice. Many of us minister in border communities. We see the desperation of families fleeing violence and death in their homelands. We know the sacrifice of mothers and fathers seeking safety for their children.

We have once again entered that grace-filled space of deep empathy, pain, and righteous indignation as we see children being torn from their parents arms, desperately reach out and eyes widen with fear; as mothers and fathers fall to their knees in tears, the trauma of their journey suffocates their energy as the window of hope grows dim or even pitch black.

The Trump Administration has scaled-up its policy of separating children from their parents when they come to the border fleeing violence and seeking help. During a six-week span from April 19 to May 31, over 2000 children have been separated from their families, at least 100 of these children are under the age of four. This separation creates major trauma for the children and families and simply adds to the already heavy anxiety of their journey. At least one such parent committed suicide.

While every nation has a responsibility to ensure its borders, Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger and to care for the most vulnerable (Matthew 25). The Administration's policy of separating families and prosecuting asylum seekers is immoral. The president of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops has clearly stated that "separating babies from their mothers is not the answer and is immoral."

This immoral policy and unjust order must no longer be followed. As religious leaders, we appeal to the heart of each individual person who participates in this tragedy of separating families. We ask you to consider the consequences of your actions and to desist as a matter of moral conscience.

We directly call to the heart of each member of Congress and the Administration. For those who have been resisting this train of injustice over many years, we deeply thank you and raise you up. For those in these institutions who have created this policy or enable it, now is time for repentance, a turning away from this sinful behavior. This immoral practice must end. The President has the power today to change the policy that has created the travesty of family

separation. Laws need to be passed to prevent such policies from developing in the future. The root causes of immigration must be the focus. Our immigrants must be welcomed.

We also particularly call on individuals in Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Department of Homeland Security, especially Catholics in these institutions to withdraw their cooperation from these unjust orders. There are effective ways to slow-down or obstruct the process, and even to directly refuse to separate the children. We understand the risks this can pose for those involved. We see you as brothers and sisters. If requested and as possible, we will try to facilitate direct discussions with you and pastoral care while you discern these difficult decisions as Bishop John Stowe, OFM Conv. recently suggested at the June 2018 Bishops' meeting in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We will also try as possible to mobilize resources to support you if such risks materialize into difficult consequences. Yet, know that you will become heroes for justice.

The power of a community resides in the spiritual guidance of the Spirit and in the cooperation of the people. If we allow the Spirit to guide us and we refuse to cooperate in injustice, then the leaders cannot implement this policy of separating children. We have the power if we choose to use it.

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The **Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)** supports and offers resources for U.S. leaders of Catholic men's religious institutes. CMSM promotes dialogue and collaboration on issues of religious life as well as peace and justice issues with major groups in church and society. There are more than 17,000 religious priests and brothers in the United States.
