

Brief Talking Points to Some Questions related to Unaccompanied Migrant Children*

1. *Why are they coming?*

While some may claim that the children are coming to receive immigration benefits, the U.S. Catholic Church, among many others, are asserting that the majority of children are fleeing persecution from organized crime networks in their countries. Violence and coercion, including extortion, kidnapping, threats, and coercive and forcible recruitment of children into criminal activity, are perpetrated by transnational criminal organizations and gangs. Under such circumstances, children and their parents face a stark choice: Stay and become a likely victim of violence or make a dangerous journey of thousands of miles to a place of possible safety. This is why the Church is declaring this a humanitarian crisis, requiring a response similar to that which we have for refugees over that for regular immigrants.

2. *What is our basis for believing this?*

As the Body of Christ with many members, we know this first hand through:

- The Church's many ministries in Central America and our relationships with the local Church there,
- The many ministries and the local Church on the U.S.-Mexico border addressing this crisis, and
- Members of our own Archdiocese who work in Central America as well as parishioners in twinning relationships with parishes there.

3. *Why would Ohio communities become involved?*

There are not enough detention facilities along the border to adequately care and protect these children and families. During the time between their arrest and when the U.S. government will process their claim, place them with family already here, or return them to their countries of origin, communities throughout the country can help to temporarily house these migrants in a manner that respects their human dignity.

4. *Why should Catholics care?*

Protecting the life and dignity of anyone fleeing danger, regardless of immigration status, is a fundamental principle of our faith. As Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso stated: "A willingness to give of ourselves for the sake of the most vulnerable is the measure by which we will be measured according to the one who said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' (Matt. 25:35) Jesus also told us: 'Whoever receives a child such as this in my name receives me.' (Matt. 18:5) Jesus surely loves the little children. We are called to do the same."

5. *What can I do to help?*

- Catholic Charities USA is already responding on the border. Please, stand ready to assist when a local agency within our Archdiocese receives any groups of children or is looking for a family to temporarily house a migrant child or family. The Archdiocese or one of our agencies will alert our parishes to this need when it arises.
- Advocate for a compassionate and humane response to this crisis by contacting your U.S. Senator and Representative. Go to the USCCB's Justice For Immigrants page at www.justiceforimmigrants.org or contact the Archdiocesan Catholic Social Action Office for more details.

*Most responses excerpted from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Unaccompanied Migrant Children Resource Kit: <http://www.usccb.org/about/migration-policy/unaccompanied-migrant-children-resource-kit.cfm>

