

Statement of Fr. William Kunisch on the Separation of Families at the
US Southern Border

I want to make a few comments about the current situation on the southern border of the continental United States and the separation of children from their parents who are refugees seeking asylum. The images that have been replayed on television, the self-reporting from the Department of Health & Human Services, the witness of many of our clergy and religious, and the concerns of the United Nations, have united people of many faiths, including our own Catholic Bishops, to speak out against this cruel and unnecessary policy.

Hawaii may seem far away from south Texas and other communities that border Mexico, but we are spiritually close to our brothers and sisters who are suffering these injustices.

As Catholics, we believe and support the integrity of the family. Children need their parents. To separate children from their parents as a means to deter refugees from seeking asylum in the United States, or to further the administration's political agenda, makes the children a pawn in a manufactured political drama and violates the human rights of the children.

Attempting to justify this harsh policy with quotations from the Bible makes a mockery of the Bible. The immigrant and the refugee are not our enemies. Any Jewish person or Christian with even an elementary understanding of the Old and New Testaments knows that hospitality and kindness to the stranger (the immigrant) is one of the most important themes of the Bible and a divine imperative.

Lately in the weekday Gospel readings we have been hearing how Jesus is the fulfillment of the Mosaic law, how he takes the law to a new level and makes it a matter of the heart. He does the same in regard to

hospitality for immigrants and refugees. In Matthew 25, Jesus says that whenever you welcome the stranger, you welcome me; and whenever you do not welcome the stranger; you do not welcome me.

We believe in the legitimate authority of government to enact laws to control a nation's borders. But these laws and how they are enforced must also be judged against divine law. No previous administration has resorted to such cruel measures that separate young children from their mothers and fathers. There is no reason these families cannot stay together while going through the legal process. We can and must do better.

Our Catholic bishops have asked us to support legislation that immediately ends the practice of family separation at the border. You can visit the USCCB Justice for Immigrants website to send an email to our representatives. A link to the site is provided on the homepage of our parish website, resurrectionhawaii.org.

We pray for the safety, protection, and reunification of all immigrant and refugee families that are seeking better lives. We make our prayer through the intercession of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who themselves were once refugees.

Fr. William Kunisch

Pastor

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