



DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Dear Friends in Christ,

I write to you in my office as your bishop to encourage you to persevere in authentic faith during these challenging times that call for prayer and clarity of conscience in exercising true patriotism and respect for the common good and human dignity.

The recent executive order issued by our president offers draconian measures against the threat to border security by terrorism. The order bans for four months refugees from any part of the world from entering the United States; it bans for ninety days all people seeking entry from seven predominantly Muslim nations; it further bans for an indefinite period of time the entry of Syrian refugees.

The substance and tenor of this order and its promulgation foster fear of outsiders and tempt us to sin by religious bigotry and by omission of our Christian obligation to welcome the stranger. The refugees, both Muslim and Christian, fleeing from ISIS and other extremists, are sacrificing all they have in the name of security and religious freedom. Often, they could be spared if only they surrendered to the violent demands of their tormentors. Yet, they stand firm in the integrity of their conscience and in their faith in God. Many are families, no different from yours, seeking safety and security for their children.

A radical ban on all seeking entry into the United States destroys a reasonable balance between our need to screen vigilantly for infiltrators who could do us harm and our moral obligation to shelter those in harm's way. A halt to resettlement, albeit for limited amount of time, imposes even more hardships upon refugees who have already endured some of life's worst atrocities.

In our readings at Mass this weekend, the prophet Isaiah instructs us that we are to share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when we see them, and not to turn our back on our neighbor. Welcoming the stranger and those in flight is not one option among many in the Christian life. Christ's Catholic Church cannot turn away from those in need.

THE CATHOLIC CENTER

To help allay any fears, I remind you that since 1975 Catholic Charities of Fort Worth, the Diocese's social services arm, has been successfully resettling refugees who have come from around the world including these places. The support system provided to each refugee or refugee family has resulted in 96 percent of its clients becoming self-sufficient, productive members of the community within six months.

I ask that you join me in asking our government officials for a humanitarian implementation of the recent executive order that will enable refugees---Muslim and Christian---who are fleeing religious persecution, who fear for their lives, and who were expelled from their homeland to be resettled in as safe and expedient manner as possible. Most especially I ask you to pray for the security of our nation and for all of those who are placed in harm's way by this current and extreme policy. I remain,

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

Most Reverend Michael F. Olson, STD
Bishop of Fort Worth