



SAINT IGNATIUS

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Office of the President

January 30, 2017

Dear Friends in Christ,

As you may be aware, the recently enacted Executive Order barring Syrian refugees from entering the U.S. and halting resettlement programs of all refugees has left many in peril. Inasmuch as this order blatantly contradicts Catholic social teaching, we Catholics have an obligation to speak out in defense of our brothers and sisters. Further, as Catholic educators, we are called to model our behavior for the young men we serve here at Saint Ignatius High School. Reflecting on our goals as Ignatian educators, the late Fr. General, Fr. Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., former superior general of the Jesuits, stated:

“The ultimate aim of a Jesuit education is that full growth of the person which leads to action – action especially that is suffused with the spirit and presence of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Man-for-Others.”

I firmly believe that now is a time for action, a teachable moment, both to fulfill our own promise as Christians and to urge our students to do the same. I would like Saint Ignatius High School to add its own voice to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Pope Francis, St. John Paul II, Fr. James Martin, S.J. and the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States, which is led by one of my predecessors Fr. Timothy Kesicki, S.J.

In their eloquent condemnation of the recent Executive Order regarding immigration and refugees, the U.S. Catholic bishops clarify what the Executive Order entails:

The executive order virtually shuts down the refugee admissions program for 120 days, reduces the number of refugees to be admitted to the United States this year from 110,000 to 50,000 individuals, and indefinitely suspends the resettlement of Syrian refugees. In addition, it prioritizes religious minorities suffering from religious persecution, thereby deprioritizing all other persons fleeing persecution; calls for a temporary ban on admission to the United States from a number of countries of particular concern (all Muslim majority); and imposes a yet-to-be determined new vetting process for all persons seeking entry to the United States.
(USCCB Press Release, January 27, 2017)

These actions are contrary to the Gospel and are contrary to the values and doctrine of Catholic social teaching. “This weekend proved to be a dark moment in U.S. history,” said Blaise Cardinal Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago. “The Executive Order to turn away refugees and to close our nation to those, particularly Muslims, fleeing violence, oppression and persecution is contrary to both Catholic and American values.” Fr. James Martin, SJ, editor of the Jesuit journal *America* draws this out further, based on a well-known Scripture text:

Maybe you think that you have a right to refuse a person in need. And that you have the right to protect yourself. Well, we do have the right to self-protection. But refusing the one in need because you want to protect yourself, especially when the other is in desperate need and obvious danger, is not what Christianity is about. It’s about the opposite. It’s about helping the stranger, even if it carries some risk. That’s the Parable of the Good Samaritan in a nutshell. (Fr. James Martin, S.J. *America*, January 28, 2017)

The Society of Jesus in Canada and the United States has reaffirmed its long-standing commitment to ministry among refugees:

The Jesuits – through our work in high schools, colleges, parishes, and signature ministries such as Jesuit Refugee Service – have a long, proud tradition of welcoming and accompanying refugees, regardless of their religion, as they begin their new lives in the United States. We will continue that work, defending and standing in solidarity with all children of God, whether Muslim or Christian. (Jesuit Conference of Canada & the United States, January 29, 2017)

Bishop Joe S. Vásquez, chairman of the Committee on Migration for the USCCB, states:

"The United States has long provided leadership in resettling refugees. We believe in assisting all those who are vulnerable and fleeing persecution, regardless of their religion. This includes Christians, as well as Yazidis and Shia Muslims from Syria, Rohingyas from Burma, and other religious minorities. However, we need to protect all our brothers and sisters of all faiths, including Muslims, who have lost family, home, and country. They are children of God and are entitled to be treated with human dignity. We believe that by helping to resettle the most vulnerable, we are living out our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do."

Fr. James Martin, S.J. invokes the writing of St. John Paul II, in his recent *America Magazine* post,

"St. John Paul II, wrote dozens of times about refugees and migrants. 'Seek to help our brother and sister refugees in every possible way by providing a welcome... Show them an open mind and a warm heart,' he said. And, as if predicting our current situation, he said, 'It is necessary to guard against the rise of new forms of racism or xenophobic behavior, which attempt to make these brothers and sisters of ours scapegoats for what may be difficult local situations.'

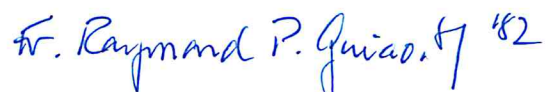
For this is an issue of life or death. Migrants flee from profound poverty, which causes suffering and can lead to death. Refugees flee from persecution, terror and war, out of fear for their lives. This is, then, one of the church's life issues, so dear to St. John Paul II." (Fr. James Martin, S.J. *America*, January 28, 2017)

As faculty, staff, and administration of this revered Catholic institution, we take seriously Christ's charge to proclaim the message of his Gospel, to banish the demon of fear and to embrace the risk inherent in loving all of our brothers and sisters, just as Christ himself did during his life on earth. His very words in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew will ever stand as the criterion for our destiny at the Last Judgment:

"I was a stranger and you did not welcome me." And people will say, "When were you a stranger and we did not take care of you?" And he will say, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

In addition to our common task of forming and educating our students, I strongly urge you to contact your political representatives and urge them to oppose these measures. Let your friends and neighbors know these are issues of faith, not politics, and, most importantly, pray for those immigrants and refugees who live in fear and desperation.

Yours ever in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Fr. Raymond P. Guiao, S.J." followed by a stylized flourish and the year "1982".

Rev. Raymond P. Guiao, S.J., President