



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Atlantic-Midwest Province



School Sisters of Notre Dame
Central Pacific Province

Transforming the world through education

Our Response to the President's Emergency Declaration

Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Departments

On February 15, President Trump bypassed the U.S. Congress's prerogative to fund federal projects by declaring a national emergency, thus enabling himself, without Congressional approval, to transfer revenues from federal accounts to build a wall along the southern border of the United States. He proclaimed that "it's a great thing to do because we have an invasion of drugs, invasion of gangs, invasion of people, and it's unacceptable."¹ He also worried about the "monstrous caravans" of families seeking refuge at the border, warning that without a wall, "they'd be welcomed to the United States."²

The Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation Departments of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest and Central Pacific Provinces, reject this action as an abuse of executive power. The real national emergency resides in our nation's failure to respond with compassion and competence to the needs of the vulnerable people at the U.S. southern border. The men, women, and children who have risked their lives throughout the dangerous trek to the U.S. border are not "monsters," but human beings entitled to human rights, including legal pathways through which they can pursue a better life. People fleeing pervasive violence, poverty, and instability have the right to seek asylum in another country and to receive a fair hearing and due process under international law. Because the U.S. immigration system has not been revised since 1986, we cannot respond efficiently and justly to those who wish to migrate legally, nor can we respond satisfactorily to the plight of migrants seeking shelter on our shores. Since our immigration system is broken, we do have an emergency on our hands – but it is one that a wall will not fix.

Therefore, we call on the president and Congress to act on the real emergency by passing a comprehensive immigration reform policy that will secure the U.S. border while making it easier for migrant people to work or reside in the U.S. legally. This will include pathways to legalization and citizenship for undocumented persons in the U.S.; family reunification as a priority; opportunities and protections for low-skilled immigrants to work in the U.S.; due process protections within immigration enforcement policies; addressing the root causes of migration such as global, economic, environmental and social injustices; and effective and humane border security that recognizes the human rights of all people, including migrants suspected of unauthorized entry. Immigration policy must adhere to the dictates of justice and compassion, "a nation may not simply decide that it wants to provide for its own people and no others. A sincere commitment to the needs of all must prevail."³

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2019/02/15/read-transcript-trump-rose-garden-speech/Sd5RoKOoHjF2jSzPxGyRaP/story.html>

² <https://www.bostonglobe.com/news/nation/2019/02/15/read-transcript-trump-rose-garden-speech/Sd5RoKOoHjF2jSzPxGyRaP/story.html>

³ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples.cfm>