



June 20, 2018

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

"Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them (Mark 10:15-16).

I pray that by the time this letter reaches you the hundreds and hundreds of children, including small babies, who have been taken by force from their parents and are currently detained in this country will be returning to their families. People across the political spectrum and faith communities in America are joining in heartbroken and outraged opposition to what may well be the cruelest and least defensible policy decision by an American president and administration in our memory.

The recordings and photographs of the children are almost impossible for any caring person to apprehend. I left New York late last week to baptize my youngest grandchild, and as we watched my daughter's happy, carefree children in their safe home she turned to me and said, "I can't follow this news story. I can't even open the articles." Because it does violence to our eyes and ears, and assault and battery to our hearts. It strikes terror. And it is racist. And it is systematic child abuse.

The human cost of this administration's policy is being paid by the smallest and most vulnerable among us, and by parents agonizing over their separation from their children. It is an increasing worry that some of these children may never be able to be reunited with their mothers and fathers. Some may be lost forever. Long after this policy is shut down, which it will be, the trauma experienced by these children, even those who are safely reunited, will continue to mark and shape them. That this tsunami of human suffering is being imposed to leverage and further a political end is a pure evil. And it must be named as such.

"Do you renounce the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?" That question is asked in churches in the Diocese of New York before font and altar at every Baptism, and it speaks directly to the responsibilities of Christians living in a broken country, and calls us to consider the obligations that come with that renunciation. If the things we do and the things we say are not defined and guided by (or are incompatible with) the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and by his Sermon on the Mount, and his new commandment of godly love, then they are plainly unchristian.

We know that America is as divided today as it has ever been. For a long time we have been driven into political camps by the policies of our leaders and government. We know that faithful Christians may disagree over partisan political philosophies, though we see that we are living in those divisions and participating in them with a greater weight of emotional investment and even hatred than we are used to. We are in trouble as a people and a nation. Yet it will be a mistake for us to look at this treatment of children and imagine that this is just another political debate or even another misguided policy. This "policy" exposes the deep sickness and toxic infestation of human sin. And it exposes a fundamental immorality within this administration. Which we must not forget.

Today Margaret and I will give some of our money to bring relief to these children, and help for their families. And we will pray for the Episcopal Church as it prepares to gather in Convention in Texas. Right now we have to do anything we can to save the children. And then we must save the Beloved Community. And then we must save the common life we share with all people. So that we may save America.

*"Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me,
so that they may be one, as we are one" (John 17:11).*

With every good wish, I remain

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew" with a stylized flourish at the end.

The Right Reverend Andrew ML Dietsche
Bishop of New York

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As this letter is going out we are learning that the president is taking action to reunite these families. I am profoundly grateful for that. But this was very much a crisis of his own making, which was entirely preventable. So that now the reunion of families will have to take place alongside the therapeutic care of these traumatized children. Again, the world has never more needed the church to be the church, and that life of active faith and witness must be more than reflexive reaction to each new crisis. May God grace us to come together that we may help one another, and our president and all elected leaders, to rise to the high calling of God and live out those values which are for us Christians the inheritance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.