



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH
THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



Statement by Fort Worth Catholic Diocese Bishop Michael F. Olson Regarding Governor Abbott's Decision to No Longer Allow Refugees to Resettle into Texas

January 10, 2020

While my fellow Catholics in Texas and I very much respect Governor Greg Abbott, I strongly and respectfully disagree with his decision today to no longer allow refugees to resettle in Texas. I urge the Governor to reconsider his decision.

The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, the community of Fort Worth, as well as communities throughout Texas and have long cooperated with the offices of our state in providing safe and prudent refugee protection and resettlement.

Refugees chosen for resettlement in the United States are a special group in need of protection—they have fled life-threatening situations in their home countries. To be clear; these refugees are people who have followed the legal vetting process in the United States that President Trump has approved. They have been screened and identified by the federal immigration administration and scheduled to arrive this year. Many of these are Christians fleeing religious persecution.

Catholic Charities Fort Worth and the Catholic Charities offices across our state have compassionately worked in partnership with the federal government, the state, and local officials and communities to help refugees make Texas their home, finding employment, learning English, and integrating into our great state of Texas that they now call home. I join my voice with my brother bishops in Texas as we state, “The refugees who have already resettled in Texas have made our communities even more vibrant. As Catholics, an essential aspect of our faith is to welcome the stranger and care for the alien.” Our past responsible efforts have helped businesses and schools in Texas to benefit from the hard work and dedication of these new arrivals to our community.

Catholic Charities Fort Worth will continue to serve refugee clients that are here. While the Governor’s decision halts initial resettlement in Texas, the surrounding states’ governors have granted consent to resettle refugees in their states. We expect secondary migration from these states to bring

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some refugees to Fort Worth and all of Texas. If Governor Abbott stands by this decision, current refugee support services will have to replace the lost federal refugee funds with local dollars currently dedicated to social supports services such as work programs and out of poverty programs. For example, 96 percent of refugees being resettled in Fort Worth reach self-sufficiency and employment within six months of arrival. The responsible assistance of refugees with collaborative oversight between the government and Catholic Charities contributes to the common good and helps to prevent poverty and crime.

I ask you to urge Governor Abbott to reverse his decision, for the sake of refugees, for the sake of the poor who need our assistance, for the sake of peace, and for the sake of Texas.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Michael F. Olson

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