



Bishop Olson's Statement on the Use of Family Separation at the U.S./Mexico Border

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) teaches that “the fourth commandment is addressed expressly to children in their relationship to their father and mother, because this relationship is the most universal.” The Catechism continues that the fourth commandment also “extends to the duties of pupils to teachers, employees to employers, subordinates to leaders, citizens to their country, and to those who administer or govern it.” Furthermore, “this commandment includes and presupposes the duties of parents, instructors, teachers, leaders, magistrates, those who govern, all who exercise authority over others or over a community of persons” (CCC §2199).

The Catechism calls us to consider that the fourth commandment establishes the foundation for the order of the subsequent commandments revealed to Moses for the salvation of the world and their correlative rights; among these are included the right to life, the integrity of human sexuality and marriage, the right to property, the right to be told the truth, and the right to a good name. Thus the Church teaches that the fourth commandment “constitutes one of the foundations of the social doctrine of the Church” (CCC §2198).

So much of what we see presented to us through eyewitness accounts and through the lenses of the contemporary media and social media of the separation of the children of asylum seekers from their parents offers us a living metaphor for the destructive assaults upon family life in the name of individual rights. The unwarranted separation of parents from their children not only harms those relationships but undermines the right to life, the respect for legitimate authority, and all other basic human rights in society.

The use of separation of children, including babies, from their mothers and fathers at the U.S./Mexico border as a tool for implementing the Administration's zero tolerance policy is sinful because it undermines the right to life of the vulnerable, directly traumatizes those who have already been injured, and undermines the role of legitimate authority.

I call on each of us to examine our own consciences and interior lives if we in any way take cruel delight in these actions done in the name of our government and in the name of the security of our borders. Separating children from their mothers and fathers in an already traumatic time in their lives as immigrants seeking asylum is inhumane and morally wrong without due regard for the safety and protection of the children and informed consent of their parents. To herald this practice as just and measured lacks compassion, promotes hardness of heart, and further desensitizes us to our mission and responsibilities as Christians to give comfort to the afflicted and to promote respect for human life, the role of legitimate authority, and the common good.

The Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth and Catholic Charities Fort Worth, as in the past, will live out our mission to help those in need. Through its International Foster Care Program and The Assessment Center, Catholic Charities Fort Worth has received and is assisting children who have been separated from their parents at the U.S./Mexico border. Catholic Charities staff stands ready to expand the program as needed.

If you are interested in learning more about becoming a foster parent, please contact the International Foster Care Program at ifc@ccdofw.org.

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Bishop of Fort Worth