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Letter to the Editor

A statement on immigration and the separation of families

By Bishop Donald J. Hying, Roman Catholic Diocese of Gary

Clergy, religious leaders, organizations, institutions and individuals have succeeded in expressing their outrage over the Trump administration's policy of separating children of refugees fleeing poverty and violence and attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. On June 20, the president signed an executive order halting the separation policy, which took upwards of 2,000 children from their parents and placed them in tent camps.

The Catholic bishops throughout the U.S. spoke out strongly against the policy, stating that refugee children most certainly belong to their parents rather than the government or any other institution, calling the act of stealing them away from their parents a grave sin – immoral and evil.

The brokenness of our immigration system is a reality we can all agree upon. Policies enacted to separate families are not who we are as a nation, and it's certainly not what we ever want to become. Immigration reform is the "can that has been kicked down the road" by many previous presidents and Congresses. Now is the time to create laws which answer the need to protect and control our borders, on the one hand, and acknowledge the needs of very poor and desperate people who are fleeing situations of injustice and suffering, on the other.

With one voice, the U.S. bishops continue to call upon Congress to finally resolve the pressing issue of immigration by creating a legal and expedient path to citizenship for those seeking a better life for their families. In welcoming the immigrant, the Catholic Church continues the work of charity and justice, which has enriched our country with people who have come here from all over the world, seeking to live in a democracy and make their own contribution to the common good.

We pray for our country. We pray for our legislators who struggle with the task of reforming a dysfunctional immigration system. And we pray for a lasting change that will only come when we start with our own transformation.