



DIOCESE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Catholic Charities CEO Responds to Misleading News Reports on Immigrants

Jacksonville, Fla. – More than once now, Fox News has spread inaccurate information stating Catholic Charities encourages and assists undocumented immigrants to cross the border (by land, sea or air) to settle in this country without proper documentation. I believe it is essential to provide clarification to this misinformation.

No immigrants coming to the United States through legal channels can enter without the federal government's approval. People at the border are fingerprinted and screened before entering this country. If a person is found to have a criminal record, they are not permitted to enter the United States. Only people that have been cleared are allowed entry.

I assure you that Catholic Charities in the Diocese of St. Augustine or elsewhere in the United States does not encourage nor provide financial or travel assistance to undocumented immigrants. We resettle immigrants who come to this country documented and with refugee status assigned by the government.

There is a significant difference between immigrant and refugee status. Refugees flee persecution, fear of death and torture. They undergo a very strict vetting process conducted by federal officials. One of the first things they do when they arrive here is to obtain employment and enroll their children in school. The work of Catholic Charities is humanitarian, not political.

“We praise the tireless efforts of the Catholic Charities member agencies at the border and throughout the country in their ministry to migrants. With constantly changing conditions, surges in border crossings, limited facilities, the media spotlight, and the pressures of regulatory efforts designed to curtail their humanitarian work, they march on caring for one human life at a time — whether it be a fearful child, a parent seeking to provide for their family or a potential victim of human trafficking. In caring for the stranger, they are the hands of Jesus Christ,” said Dominican Sister Donna Markham, Ph.D., president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA.

Anita Hassell, M.B.A.
CEO and Diocesan Director of Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc.

To learn more about Catholic Charities and their work settling immigrants and refugees who have been cleared by the government, [click here](#), or visit www.ccbjax.org. To reach Anita Hassell, call (904) 899-5500 or email ahassell@ccbdosa.org.

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