

U.S. Bishops' Migration Chairman Reacts to Policy Separating Families at U.S./Mexico Border: "Children are Not Instruments of Deterrence"

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The Department of Homeland Security has recently acknowledged implementation of the [policy](#) of separating families arriving at the U.S./Mexico Border. Most Reverend Joe S. Vásquez, Bishop of Austin and Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee on Migration, issued the following statement in response:

"Forcibly separating children from their mothers and fathers is ineffective to the goals of deterrence and safety and contrary to our Catholic values. Family unity is a cornerstone of our American immigration system and a foundational element of Catholic teaching. 'Children are a gift from the Lord, the fruit of the womb, a reward.' (Psalm 127:3) Children are not instruments of deterrence but a blessing from God.

Rupturing the bond between parent and child causes scientifically-proven trauma that often leads to irreparable emotional scarring. Accordingly, children should always be placed in the least restrictive setting: a safe, family environment, ideally with their own families.

My brother bishops and I understand the need for the security of our borders and country, but separating arriving families at the U.S./Mexico border does not allay security concerns. Children and families will continue to take the enormous risks of migration—

including family separation—because the root causes of migration from the Northern Triangle remain: community or state-sanctioned violence, gang recruitment, poverty, and a lack of educational opportunity. Any policies should address these factors first as we seek to repair our broken immigration system.”