

# Ursulines of Cincinnati Visions

Christ-Centered Women in a Changing World



Autumn/Winter 2018

## SEPARATING FAMILIES – ABHORRENT AND UNACCEPTABLE

Representing the Cincinnati Ursulines, Sr. Margie Efke joined hundreds of other Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky area residents in a June 14 rally to protest the U.S. government's practice of separating families in its attempt to deter them from seeking asylum in the



*Sr. Margie joined other demonstrators calling for humane treatment of children and families in need.*

U.S. Folks from Ohio and Kentucky met each other on the historic Suspension Bridge in a show of solidarity with families who cross the U.S.-Mexico border hoping to find safety and refuge from domestic, gang and other forms of violence, and a livelihood in a new country.

Asylum is a legal process the United States has offered since the end of World War II. At that time, U.S. leaders recognized the horrors of the Holocaust and the role our country could play in saving countless lives. The current violence in Mexico and Central American countries creates a similar crisis.

If given due process, today's asylum applicants would be subjected to a thorough vetting to be certain they are not a security risk for the receiving country. Proper procedure assumes applicants will cross into the country at an approved port of

entry. This summer, when border protection personnel began turning people away from those entry points, desperate families chose to cross in other places, but still planned to turn themselves in to authorities who they assumed would help them begin the application process. Instead, they

were met with the Administration's "zero tolerance" policy. All border-crossers were to be criminally prosecuted, whether or not they were seeking asylum.

In order to criminally prosecute the parents, they had to be separated from their children. Regardless of whether these children are or were held in "child-friendly" detention centers or placed in foster situations, the trauma of being abruptly separated from

the parent, without a means of communicating parent-to-child, will very likely cause lifetime psychological and emotional damage to the child.

In their June 13-14 assembly, the U.S. bishops issued a statement that proclaims, "At its core, asylum is an instrument to preserve the right to life." They call upon the government to exercise its discretion to protect children from the irreparable harm and trauma that separation from their parents can cause.

Pope Francis was also quick to respond. In a statement published on World Refugee Day, June 20, the pontiff commented, "A person's dignity does not depend on them being a citizen, a migrant, or a refugee. Saving the life of someone fleeing war and poverty is an act of humanity."

In response to outcry and pressure from religious leaders, justice organi-

zations and private citizens, the Administration stopped separating families in late June. Months later, though, hundreds of already-separated children have not yet been reunited with their parents. The Administra-



*Advocates met at the border — between Ohio and Kentucky — to say "NO" to the policy of separating immigrant families seeking asylum in the U.S.*

tion's proposed alternative, to indefinitely incarcerate parents and children together, with no special child protections, is not acceptable. Advocates urge releasing families, using available humane methods for tracking them during the potentially long waiting period until their cases can be heard. Family members could support each other emotionally and materially during the interim. The Ursulines, with other believers and activists, call upon legislators to exercise compassion in immigration policies and to finally enact comprehensive immigration reform that both protects U.S. citizens and heeds the Gospel call to welcome the stranger.



Dear Friends,

I write having recently returned from my annual retreat at Cedars of Peace in Loretto, Kentucky. I always look forward to this time to be outdoors with God in the peaceful woods and surroundings. God had somewhat different plans for me this time, as six of the seven days were basically rain-outs. Thankfully, my cabin's

screened porch provided at least a semblance of being outdoors. Both my director and I having to adjust our expectations to the week's weather, she offered this prayer: "May I let go of any desire that whatever happens be other than it is." It's a healthy, but challenging to attain, perspective that focuses the individual on God's will rather than one's own.

Such a prayer stance, though, doesn't absolve one from the responsibility to work to change unjust situations in our world. Prioritizing our concerns is a challenge. We Ursulines have chosen to highlight three priorities in this issue of *Visions*. Inescapable is the recent new revelation of extensive sexual abuse committed by Catholic priests and the systemic cover-up within the church hierarchy. The Ursulines of Cincinnati strongly endorse the statement released in late August by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). That statement is reprinted here in *Visions*. St. Angela urged her 16th-century followers, and she appeals to us today, to "Pray, and get others to pray, that God not abandon his Church, but reform it as he pleases, and as he sees best for us, and more to his honor and glory." As we pray, may we also call for, and take responsible action for, the healing so badly needed.

Also in this issue of *Visions*, you'll find two articles related to our ongoing concern for immigrants and refugees. In early summer, the separation of families seeking asylum at our southern border caused local, national and worldwide public outcry. More recently, an announcement about plans to significantly reduce the number of admissions of refugees to the U.S. has called for our intervention. We invite you to join us in prayer and action as together we strive to live the Gospel.

Sister Margie Efke  
General Minister

## Our Mission Statement

We, the Ursulines of Cincinnati, are a community of Christ-centered women transforming lives with compassion and creativity. We pledge to respond to the needs of our times through our diverse ministries and in collaboration with the laity. We will respect the dignity of each individual, nurture their unique gifts, and be present to them as we all seek a deeper and more personal relationship with God.

## Ursulines of Cincinnati

Sr. Margie Efke, OSU,  
General Minister

### Editor

Sr. Eileen Connelly, OSU

Special Acknowledgment to  
Stephanie Lang Beckmeyer (SUA '89)  
for design



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR Welcome

Please feel free to write letters to our editor on anything you might like to say about articles that appeared in *Visions* or anything else that is of interest to you.

We welcome your opinion.

Please address letters to:

Eileen Connelly, OSU  
Ursulines of Cincinnati  
1339 East McMillan Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45206

# URSULINES SUPPORT WORLD REFUGEE DAY CELEBRATION

Of the 65.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide - refugees – less than 1% gets resettled. Most live their lives in refugee camps. These are sobering facts! A piece of good news is that about 200 refugees are resettled in the

ers to help provide a welcoming community. Friends will recall that, earlier this year, the Ursulines partnered with Catholic Charities of Southwest Ohio, the only agency serving refugees resettled in our

deep concern over President Trump's plans to reduce the 2019 refugee admissions to the U.S. to



*The World Refugee Day event is an opportunity for recently re-settled children and adults to meet new friends, play with and enjoy each other, and share their culture!*

Cincinnati area each year. The Ursulines don't have personnel to serve those families directly. They can, however, collaborate with oth-

area, to bring the Columbus Crossing Borders exhibit to Cincinnati. In June, we co-sponsored the Charities' annual celebration of World

Refugee Day.

Recent attempts to change national policy on refugees call for our heightened attention. The Sisters join Catholic Charities and the many allies and supporters of displaced peoples in



*Children from different homelands enjoyed fun together and shared aspects of their culture.*

30,000 from the already historically low 2018 limit of 45,000. We must do all we can to call our nation to do its part to protect people across the globe who seek protection from violence and persecution.

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## LCWR STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ABUSE BY CLERGY



Silver Spring, MD—The recent news detailing the extensive and sometimes brutal sexual abuse committed by Catholic priests in the United States has left us at the Leadership Conference of Women Religious sickened and ashamed of the church we love, trusted, and have committed our lives to serve. We weep and grieve with all who over the decades have been victimized by sexual predators within the faith community and feel their pain as our own. We recognize that the damage done to many is irreparable.

Sexual abuse is a horrific crime, and the horror is so much worse when committed by persons in whom society has placed its trust and confidence. Equally difficult to comprehend is the culture within the church hierarchy that tolerated the abuse, left children and vulnerable adults subject to further abuse, and created practices that covered up the crimes and protected the abusers. We call upon the church leadership

to implement plans immediately to support more fully the healing of all victims of clergy abuse, hold abusers accountable, and work to uncover and address the root causes of the sexual abuse crisis. We believe that the work to implement the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and its subsequent revisions has been an important and effective step in addressing allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy. We have watched the Conference of Major Superiors of Men diligently work to assure the protection and safety of children and youth and applaud its efforts. However, it is clear that more serious action needs to be taken to assure that the culture of secrecy and cover-up ends.

We also call upon church leaders to attend to the severe erosion of the church's moral standing in the world. Its members are angry, confused, and struggling to find ways to make sense of the church's failings.

The church leadership needs to speak with honesty and humility about how this intolerable culture developed and how that culture will now be deconstructed, and to create places where church members can express our anger and heartbreak. We call on the leaders to include competent members of the laity more fully in the work to eradicate abuse and change the culture, policies, and practices. We are committed to collaborate in the essential work of healing and transformation that our church so desperately needs.

Finally, we recognize that the vast majority of priests have not committed abuse and are suffering greatly because of the actions of some of their brothers. We offer them our prayer and support as they continue their ministries in these very challenging times and as they too struggle to understand the complexity of factors that led to this deplorable situation.

Your support of the Ursulines is deeply appreciated. Financial contributions may be made by check payable to Ursulines of Cincinnati and mailed to

The Ursuline Sisters of Cincinnati

1339 East McMillan Street

Cincinnati, Ohio 45206-2180

Attn: Convent Development Department

[or you may use the enclosed envelope.]

Credit card contributions may be made by calling Allison McGraw at  
513-961-3410, ext. 146.

THANK YOU!

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