



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

28 May 2018

A Pastoral Letter from Presiding Bishop George Lucey, FCM, on the Crisis of Immigrant Children

“Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9)

We read in the Hebrew scriptures that this is the question Cain, murderer of his brother Abel, threw at God in an attempt to justify his bloodguilt. It has been on my mind these last few weeks as we learn about the harm our nation’s increasingly harsh immigration policies are inflicting on innocent children.

Last month, Department of Health and Human Services official Steven Wagner testified that his agency has lost track of nearly 1,500 children who crossed the U.S.-Mexico border unaccompanied by adults and were subsequently placed with sponsors. Only 85 of the missing children have been accounted for thus far.

The tragedy of this situation is compounded by remarks recently made by Attorney General Jeff Sessions. Speaking in Arizona and California, Mr. Sessions insisted that our nation “cannot take everyone on this planet who is in a difficult situation.” Consequently, he continued, “If you cross the border unlawfully ... then we will prosecute you. If you smuggle an illegal alien across the border, then we’ll prosecute you. ... If you’re smuggling a child, then we’re going to prosecute you, and that child will be separated from you, probably, as required by law.”

His conclusion? “If you don’t want your child separated, then don’t bring them (sic) across the border illegally. It’s not our fault that somebody does that.”

In other words, we’re not the keepers of your children.

Just as Abel’s spilt blood cried out to heaven, so the suffering that our immigration policies inflict upon children will testify against us as a nation. All of us—people of faith and people of good will who may have no faith—are duty-bound to welcome and protect sojourners who come to our doors in need of hospitality. Surely that duty can’t be any more obvious than when the well-being of children is at stake. With due respect to Mr. Sessions, if we turn them away, or fail to protect them once they’re in the country, it *is* our fault.

An essential principle of Christian morality is communality: the belief that we are siblings to one another by virtue of our shared divine parentage, and that consequently no one is outside the family circle of moral concern, especially those who, like children, are most vulnerable. I pray with all my heart that we and our elected officials will be moved to take this principle seriously and come to see that all of us are indeed one another’s keeper.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "George R. Lucey, FCM".

Most Reverend George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop