

Statement of Most Reverend Jaime Soto

Bishop of Sacramento, California

During his recent visit to the United States, Pope Francis commended the Catholic Church in the United States for our work with refugees and immigrants, “The Church in the United States knows like few others the hopes present in the hearts of these ‘pilgrims’”. This has been one of the proudest aspects of the Catholic legacy in America. In this way, we have obeyed the command of Jesus in the 25th chapter of the gospel of Matthew, “Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25.40)

Our long history working with refugees dates back more than a century, over the course of many threatening global conflicts. This proven experience has given us the know-how as well as the practiced charity to respond prudently and compassionately to the current crisis regarding Syrian Refugees, including Muslim, Christian, as well as other threatened ethnic minorities. The Catholic Community confides not only in the Lord’s moral mandate to care for the “stranger” but in the wisdom acquired through generations of service.

Refugees coming to the United States are subject to a thorough review process lasting up to two years in order to ensure that their coming to the United States is safe both for the refugee as well as ourselves.

We are witnessing the worst refugee crisis since World War II. At that time, the doors were closed to certain refugees, the memory of which still haunts us. We have learned from that experience.

The savage terror afflicted on the people of Paris has shocked our souls. Still, this should not blind us to the plight of families and children seeking a refuge of mercy. Nor should it dissuade us from exercising our freedom for the sake of what is good, just, and noble.

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