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Last Friday, January 27, President Trump issued an EXECUTIVE ORDER entitled: PROTECTING THE NATION FROM FOREIGN TERRORIST ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES. We, the Catholic Bishops of Alaska, find the recent Executive Order troubling in that it violates our longstanding practice as a nation with fundamental human principles of justice to ‘welcome the stranger’ (Matthew 25:35). As a nation founded in part on religious liberty, and that all were to be treated as equal, we are capable of much better. We are called to a higher standard to work for righteousness, to be merciful and to be peacemakers. (Matthew 5: 3-10) These values are at the heart of the common good, which is the goal of all governmental institutions.

As Catholics, we appreciate the heightened concern regarding Christians who have been persecuted because of their faith. Many have been murdered and witnessed the destruction of their places of worship. However, we are troubled by any actions that would target a particular group of persons based upon the ethnicity, language they speak, the religion they profess and their country of origin.

The United States, with its strong humanitarian legacy, has always been a leader in refugee protection. Since 1980, and the passage of the Refugee Act, over 3 million refugees from war torn countries throughout the world have been able to rebuild their lives in the U.S. Today, the world is facing the worst displacement crisis in recorded history with over 65 million individuals displaced and 21 million refugees fleeing persecution and violence. The work of U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and their affiliate here in Alaska is now more important than ever.

We share a common voice with our brother bishops from the USCCB who issued a statement on January 31, “While we also recognize that the United States government has a duty to protect the security of its people, we must nevertheless employ means that respect both religious liberty for all, and the urgency of protecting the lives of those who desperately flee violence and persecution. It is our conviction as followers of the Lord Jesus that welcoming the stranger and protecting the vulnerable lie at the core of the Christian life.”

As we ponder in our hearts and minds the January 15, 2017 message of Pope Francis, given on the World Day of *MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES*, where he said “no one is a stranger in God’s family” and “Each person is precious; persons are more important than

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things, and the worth of an institution is measured by the way it treats the life and dignity of human beings, particularly when they are vulnerable, as in the case of child migrants.”  
May this be a call to action where we move from our comfort zones and welcome the stranger in our midst.



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