



## ARCHDIOCESE OF SEATTLE

910 MARION ST

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98104

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

### TO THE PEOPLE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE:

Many refugees from civil strife in Central America are finding their way into the United States. Some have come to our own state. These refugees need our protection and help. Unfortunately, the Immigration and Naturalization Services has chosen to deny these innocent victims refuge. It is my judgement that one of their reasons for doing so is that they find it politically embarrassing to admit that the governments which the United States supports cannot protect their citizens from violence. In fact, these governments are often the perpetrators of that violence. The effect of these policies is to subject these refugees to deportation and to further exposure to the vindictive actions of authorities in their countries. It is our obligation as Christians to offer these innocent people sanctuary.

There are many ways individuals and parish communities can join in providing necessary sanctuary to these refugees. Some can provide for their basic necessities - food, shelter, clothing. Some can provide the refugees the means to support themselves. Some will be able to form support groups for those working directly with the refugees. A few will be able to go the last step and offer refugees from Central America sanctuary from the law, which in this case, is being applied unjustly. I want you to know that the Archdiocese will support any and all of these efforts on behalf of Central American refugees.

I believe the kind of service we provide these refugees should be the choice of individuals and of parish communities. I ask you to make your choices in prayerful reflection. As an archdiocese, we will provide coordination for your activities, technical assistance, and legal support through the Justice and Peace Center. We will support efforts to change the Immigration and Naturalization Service ruling which excludes these persons as legitimate refugees.

These refugees and the victims of war around the world witness in their own blood to the Cross of Christ. Just as the people of Jesus' day were confronted by the events of His passion, we, too must ask ourselves where we stand in the face of the passion of the people of Central America, the Middle East, South Africa, Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, and Eastern Europe. If we experience their passion as the crucifixion, we must ask what we can be and do to bring about Christ's resurrection.

Raymond G. Hunthausen  
Archbishop of Seattle