

28th January 2021

President Biden,

We are Catholics who minister to migrants at the US-Mexico border, inspired by the invitation of Jesus of Nazareth to be peacemakers and servant leaders.

With this letter, you will find several policy recommendations which we believe require urgent attention. But more importantly, we invite you to join us in a journey of healing, justice and reconciliation -- a process of deep engagement with those whom we serve on the US-Mexico border, and with the communities in the countries from which they come.

Our hearts are broken and we are shaken by the violence of the past month in our nation's capital. A divisive politics has long proceeded unchecked, unmoored from love of neighbor, and enabled by the silence of those who had responsibility to speak. In our work on the border, we have seen the same steady drying up of mutual concern, the disappearance of compassion and the troubling growth of the spirit of indifference for decades.

We are inspired by your leadership in denouncing white supremacy and extremism, and in underscoring the need for our nation to prioritize the common good. Your bold proposals and action on immigration reform give us hope. We know that the critical work of rebuilding must also begin at the border, where our national bonds of solidarity and the rule of law have both been distorted and undermined. Here we have seen how fear and anxiety can be quickened into deadly hatred of neighbor, into weapons of division and racism and into wall-building between family and friends.

Harsh attitudes towards the vulnerable will not be reversed overnight and destructive policies of exclusion will not be changed without struggle. Yet we are people of hope and we know that 'the Lord hears the cry of the poor'. Humble encounters with the poor and attentiveness to their needs and aspirations converts hearts and offers vision capable of motivating a new type of politics required by the present moment. This is a politics concerned with the building up of a people in right relationship with one another and with the poor and the environment, a politics of ongoing commitment to shared values and mutual love.

The transformational change needed by migrants and our border communities will require deep listening to those who have been affected, and commitment to shared efforts to construct a common future. As Pope Francis says, if we are to come out of the multiple crises that are affecting us, 'we must rediscover the knowledge that as a people we have a shared destination'.

We must urgently begin a new process of mutual engagement that allows us to rediscover as sisters and brothers those whose dreams have been shattered by broken immigration policy. We must re-learn to see those who continue to flee to the border as neighbors in need. We need grace to dream

new dreams as well as repentance and courage to recognize all of the ways in which our country has produced harm and continues to harm migrants and their communities. And we must come to see as citizens of a common home those in Mexico and Central America who imagine a future where their children are offered security and hope.

Your election entrusts you with the responsibility of pursuing just policies as well as the important mandate to shape new life-giving narratives which can overcome hatred and fear. We pledge to work with you in this important task, and in discerning concrete ways to listen to the cry of the poor, to understand the plight of families and individuals forced to flee, and to work together boldly to reweave a common good which transcends borders. Together, with the most vulnerable, let us reimagine our common future in the United States, on the US-Mexico border and with our neighbors in Latin America.

We ask God's blessing upon you and Vice President Harris as you enter into the new responsibilities of office. In the face of rivalry, hatred and division, we extend a hand of partnership and invite you to join us as we recommit ourselves to solidarity, justice and relentless love in the face of all that divides.

Sincerely,

Most Rev. John C. Wester, Archbishop of Santa Fe

Most Rev. Robert W. McElroy, Bishop of San Diego

Most Rev. Mark J. Seitz, Bishop of El Paso

Most Rev. Edward J. Weisenburger, Bishop of Tucson

Most Rev. Ricardo Ramírez OSB, Bishop Emeritus of Las Cruces

Rev. Sean Carroll, SJ, Kino Border Initiative

Dylan Corbett, Hope Border Institute

Kenneth Ferrone, Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico

Melissa Lopez, Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services

Sr. Norma Pimentel, MJ, Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Border Ministers and Immigrant Advocates

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Laredo, TX

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

Please contact Dylan Corbett, dcorbett@hopeborder.org, for more information.

C: Hon. Anthony Blinken, Secretary of State
Hon. David Pekoske, Acting Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
Mr. Alejandro Mayorkas