

## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

### EYE ON THE CAPITOL

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#### UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AT OUR BORDER PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR PRO-LIFE WITNESS

By John Huebscher, Executive Director

The plight of over 60,000 unaccompanied children from Central America who are at our borders seeking refuge from the unspeakable horrors afflicting their homelands has stirred controversy, outrage and no end of political posturing in our country. But this situation, tragic as it is, provides an opportunity to witness what it means to be pro-life. The Catholic Church in the United States and here in Wisconsin is rising to that challenge.

The children arriving at our southern borders with Mexico are fleeing lives of danger and privation in search of something better, a life of peace and hope that is the birthright of every child. Most of these children have relatives in the United States who are willing to take them in and care for them while the legal process to determine if they can stay in this country works its will. Some children, however, have no such family to care for them. It is for them that Catholic agencies are stepping forward.

Nationally, the Catholic Office of Refugee and Migration Services offers information and resources to help those who want to be of assistance. Catholic Charities agencies across the country are offering their resources to house and care for these children.

Here in Wisconsin, Catholic Charities of the Milwaukee Archdiocese has assumed a leadership role in helping find a place for perhaps 100 unaccompanied minors to stay while their cases are adjudicated if it is necessary to place such children in this part of the country.

Some may oppose taking these children in. They cite the cost of doing so and suggest that caring for these boys and girls in their moment of need is beyond our financial capability. Before accepting that argument, however, we need to consider how that position fits into our advocacy for the unborn that are lost to abortion.

The reported on induced abortion in Wisconsin tells us that in 2012, 6,927 abortions took place in our state. We who are pro-life mourn the loss of those lives. We mourn the denial of their human dignity. We mourn the lost opportunity for them to experience life and feel love. We mourn as well the loss of any contribution these 6,900 lives would one day make to our Wisconsin community.

What we do not do is sigh with relief that we were spared the expense of caring for and raising these children. We do not celebrate the schooling we won't have to provide, the health care we won't have to offer, the housing we won't have to build. We don't rejoice that we won't incur the other expenses associated with sheltering and rearing children that are "part of the deal"

when we welcome a newborn into the world. On the contrary, we argue before our fellow citizens that our community should be prepared to do these things even if a child is “unwanted” by its parents.

If we are prepared to do this for 6,900 children lost to the abortionists, how can we accept the argument that caring for less than 2% of that number is something we can’t afford? How can we say that a handful of unaccompanied children from other lands are not our responsibility, even temporarily, and expect to be taken seriously when we argue that society should make welcome every unborn child?

We can’t say that. And our Catholic agencies are responding in the only way we can – the only way that is consistent with our values. We should be proud of them and support their efforts and support as well public policies that facilitate what they are trying to do.

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