



Statement on Syrian refugees – November 2015

Nov. 17, 2015

The recent movement of 27 governors in the United States to apparently oppose entrance to Syrian refugees to their respective states (CNN, 11/16/2015) revives an embarrassing experience in our country's history.

During World War II, those of Japanese nationality in the United States were rounded up and placed in confinement. In the aftermath of World War II, apologies and compensation were accorded to the victims of such unfortunate actions. As frequently occurs to families or nationalities, guilt was attributed by association.

In line with the long-standing American tradition, we should strive to determine how we can serve so many who are desperately seeking a new life away from terror and persecution.

The Catholic Church in Iowa has a decades-long history in assisting with the resettlement of refugees from across the globe. Out of respect for human life and dignity, welcoming the homeless and the stranger is a fundamental part of our faith. Refugees are typically among the most vulnerable people in the world, fleeing dangerous situations and looking to protect their families and children. They want to live a normal and safe life.

Each refugee must undergo a vetting process by the State Department and Homeland Security. This process includes personal interviews, extensive security checks in coordination with the National Counterterrorism Center, and pre-departure checks that occur between the initial interview and the date of travel.

Citizens of our country justifiably desire security. It will be achieved by searching out those identified with terrorism whether they be American, European, African, Asian, Middle Eastern or of any other ethnic and national origin. The federal government needs to be vigilant in regard to its responsibility to safeguard our communities against the despicable actions of terrorists.

We appreciate Gov. Branstad's concern for the safety of Iowans and expect that we can continue to work with the state on a careful process of refugee resettlement.

Most Rev. Michael Jackels, Archbishop of Dubuque

Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless, Bishop of Sioux City

Most Rev. Martin Amos, Bishop of Davenport

Most Rev. Richard Pates, Bishop of Des Moines