

**A CLARIFICATION**

By the time you read this, the Altoona City Council may or may not have passed an ordinance adversely affecting undocumented immigrants living in the community. All of us that espouse a Judeo-Christian legacy should be concerned, as it goes against the teachings that are suppose to form our lives.

You will have read my statement to the Council. Also, some weeks ago, I addressed the subject in this column. And, while my office has issued a clarification, my position on the matter is still being distorted.

First of all, I need to state that, as a Bishop of Christ's Church, I may not have any other position than the one that I am expressing. Both Jewish and Christian sacred scriptures exhort God's people to treat the aliens living among them justly. Justice is based on the fact that all human beings have a dignity that needs to be respected.

Secondly, the Catholic Church in the United States supports an effort to reform our immigration laws. It is clear that they are not effective. Moreover, the United States bishops are not opposing the securing of our borders, nor are they advocating illegal immigration. Therefore, neither am I.

What seems to have escaped so many, including good-intentioned Catholic Christians, is that the proposed ordinance has the potential of putting families out on the street. Granted, they may be undocumented immigrants. But, they are, also, human beings and children of God. Some may be elderly and some may be children, even citizens of the United States if they were born here.

Due to the fact that the ordinance, in fact, will make property owners and employers the "police," it will affect families that have been allowed to live among us for years. The federal government has not saw fit or has not been able to enforce existing immigration laws. Now, all of a sudden, a city government feels obligated to take it upon itself to do so.

A relatively recent crime in Altoona appears to have motivated the new ordinance. However, the perpetrator is not a recent immigrant. My understanding is that he was raised in his country. In any case, I would be willing to bet that there are more citizens than undocumented immigrants who commit crimes in the United States.

The position that I am taking, and have to take, has nothing to do with securing our borders. We should do that. It has nothing to do with not allowing undocumented immigrants to come into the community. That does need to be controlled.

However, this has not been done up to now. Consequently, there are families who have been living among us and will now find themselves without income and housing. That is not the American way. It, definitely, is not the Christian way. There needs to be a "grandfather clause" in the ordinance.

This Diocesan Church will have no alternative but to assist those in need. That is basic to Jesus' teaching. Should I end up in prison, please write.