



U.S. Bishops' President and Committee Chairman Say Horrific Death of Father and Daughter at Border and Appalling Conditions for Children are Cries that Reach Heaven Itself

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WASHINGTON—The cry of a father and his baby daughter who drowned crossing the Rio Grande reaches heaven itself. This unspeakable consequence of a failed immigration system, together with growing reports of inhumane conditions for children in the custody of the federal government at the border, shock the conscience and demand immediate action. Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, joins Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration, in calling on the federal government to hear the cry of the poor and vulnerable.

Their joint statement follows:

"We join with our Holy Father Pope Francis in immense sadness, having seen the horrific images of Oscar Martinez and his daughter Angie Valeria who drowned in the Rio Grande Valley while attempting to flee persecution and enter the United States. This image cries to heaven for justice. This image silences politics. Who can look on this picture and not see the results of the failures of all of us to find a humane and just solution to the immigration crisis? Sadly, this picture shows the daily plight of our brothers and sisters. Not only does their cry reach heaven. It reaches us. And it must now reach our federal government.

All people, regardless of their country of origin or legal status, are made in the image of God and should be treated with dignity and respect. Recent reports of overcrowded and unsanitary conditions are appalling and unacceptable for any person in U.S. custody, but particularly for children, who are uniquely vulnerable. Such conditions cannot be used as tools of deterrence. We can and must remain a country that provides refuge for children and families fleeing violence, persecution, and acute poverty.

Congress has a duty to provide additional funding to address the needs of children in federal custody. Their supplemental appropriations bill should also increase protections for immigrant children, including heightened standards and oversight for border facilities. It is possible and necessary to care for the safety of migrant children and the security of our citizens. By putting aside partisan interests, a nation as great as ours is able to do both."