**Bishops Address Racism and Protests in the US**

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) released statements on racism and protests in the US.  In addressing the death of George Floyd, Archbishop José Gomez, USCCB president, stated [votervoice.net], "We should honor the sacrifice of his life by removing racism and hate from our hearts and renewing our commitment to fulfill our nation's sacred promise - to be a beloved community of life, liberty, and equality for all."  Seven bishop chairmen of USCCB committees also released a statement [votervoice.net] addressing racism and the protests: "While it is expected that we will plead for peaceful non-violent protests, and we certainly do, we also stand in passionate support of communities that are understandably outraged.  Too many communities around this country feel their voices are not being heard, their complaints about racist treatment are unheeded, and we are not doing enough to point out that this deadly treatment is antithetical to the Gospel of Life."  Locally, Archbishop Paul Etienne also issued "A Call to Address Racism In Our Hearts and Community" [votervoice.net]: "As Catholics . . . We cannot stand by and not respond to incidents of racism and inhuman treatment of our black brothers and sisters."  The bishops' statements also referenced *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love* [votervoice.net], a pastoral letter addressing racism.

**Action Alert: Support Catholic Schools**

As the economy has slowed during the pandemic, so has funding for Catholic schools in Washington.  Parents face difficulty paying tuition, and parishes supporting Catholic schools are impacted by decreased collections.  Click on this action alert [votervoice.net] to urge your US Congressional leaders to include Catholic schools in COVID-19 relief programs.  Catholic schools are integral to the education system in Washington state.  They provide $302 million in annual savings to Washington taxpayers, educating over 28,000 students.  In comparing school district sizes, the Catholic school system would rank as the fifth largest school district in the state.  Act now to support Catholic education.

**Washington State Bishops Support Pro-Life Initiative 1698**

The WSCC supports signature gathering for Initiative 1698 [votervoice.net] (I-1698), a state pro-life initiative that will require an ultrasound be performed prior to an abortion.  An abortion will then be prohibited if a fetal heartbeat is detected.  Exceptions will be made for cases preventing the death of a pregnant woman and for cases involving a serious risk of substantial and irreversible impairment of a major bodily function of a pregnant woman.  Abortions performed under these circumstances will be reported to the Washington State Department of Health and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.  Petition signatures may be collected on church premises pending approval of the pastor.  Signatures should be returned to organizers and postmarked by June 24.  Additional initiative details can be found on the WSCC website [votervoice.net].

**Resuming Public Celebration of Mass**

WSCC guidelines for the reopening of churches may be found on the WSCC website [votervoice.net].  You are also encouraged to consult guidance on your diocesan website (Seattle [votervoice.net], Spokane [votervoice.net], Yakima [votervoice.net]) or parish website for specific local instructions.

**Final Days to Sign R-90 to Reject Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) Law**

Referendum-90 (R-90) gives voters the opportunity to reject a new law requiring that state school districts provide Comprehensive Sexual Health Education (CSHE) for grades kindergarten through 12.  Formerly Senate Bill 5395 [votervoice.net], this law was passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Inslee on March 27, 2020.  We are only about 3,000 signatures away from putting R-90 on the fall ballot.  Extended signature gathering events are taking place in some areas through June 8.  Petition signing locations may be found here [votervoice.net].  Click here [votervoice.net] for instructions on how to return signed petitions.  Additional information about R-90 may be found on the WSCC website [votervoice.net].

**Action Alert: Urge the Senate to Support Refugees and Immigrants in the Next COVID-19 Relief Bill**

Click here [votervoice.net] to urge your Senators to remember immigrants and refugees as they consider the next COVID-19 relief package.  In previous federal legislative efforts, immigrants and refugees have not been included in COVID-19 relief bills, although they continue to be essential workers in fields such as health care and agriculture.  Furthermore, we are called to protect the God-given dignity of every human being during this global emergency. Following the House's passage of the HEROES Act, we now turn to the Senate to move forward with this COVID-19 relief legislation.  Specifically, the USCCB's Justice for Immigrants (JFI) office calls on the Senate to: extend work authorization and visa renewal deadlines for refugees and immigrants who are providing economic and recovery assistance to our country (including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, Temporary Protective Status (TPS) holders, and essential workers); provide no-cost COVID-19 testing and treatment for all; ensure immigrant and refugee populations are eligible for stimulus payments; halt implementation of new charge rules; and appropriate $642 million in supplemental funding for the Office of Refugee Resettlement.

**Bishop Chairmen Express Solidarity With Native and Indigenous Communities During Pandemic**

The USCCB released a statement [votervoice.net] addressing the disproportionately high rate of COVID-19 cases among Native and Indigenous communities across the US.  While citing health disparities and long-standing social inequalities further exacerbated by the virus, the bishops implored "lawmakers and government officials to protect the life and dignity of Native and Indigenous peoples by working with tribal leaders to ensure strong support and ample resources to protect their communities . . ."

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was initiated by the Department of Homeland Security in 2012.  DACA provides temporary relief from deportation and work authorization for certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the U.S. as children.  DACA participants cannot have felonies or serious misdemeanors on their records.  As of June 2019, there are approximately 660,880 DACA recipients.  On September 5, 2017 President Trump announced termination of the DACA program.  Litigation followed, and in November 2019 the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments related to the legality of the DACA program.  A Supreme Court decision is expected to be issued soon.

**DACA Decision Expected Soon, Archdiocese Responds**
The archdiocese released two videos addressing DACA.  In this video [votervoice.net] Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle, speaks about DACA and calls for prayers for program participants.  In this video [votervoice.net] Chris Koehler, Director of Immigrant Assistance at St. James Cathedral gives a history of DACA, and Joe Cotton, Director of Pastoral Care at the Archdiocese of Seattle, points out that DACA recipients are priests, staff members, and parishioners in our communities.  The archdiocese has an Immigrant and Refugee Ministry ready to help those impacted by any future changes in the DACA program.  Email: joe.cotton@seattlearch.org.

**World Refugee Day: June 20**

A toolkit for World Refugee Day may be found here .  According to US law, a refugee is a person who is forced to flee his or her home country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of his or her nationality, race, religion, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.  Refugees migrate out of necessity, often in the context of civil unrest, armed conflict, or other violence.  There are 68.5 million forced migrants worldwide.  The majority of forced migrants remain in their home countries, but 25.5 million are forced to flee their homeland and seek refuge elsewhere.

According to Catholic teaching, every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore entitled to dignity and respect.  Jesus Christ himself was a migrant and child of refugees who fled persecution.  As Christians we are called to welcome our neighbors with love and compassion and provide support and care for refugees throughout the international community.

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|   | **Religious Freedom Week: June 22 -29** |

From religious persecution in China to preserving Catholic Schools to advocating for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), religious freedom is a broad policy area.  Opportunities to reflect and act upon religious freedom during Religious Freedom Week are available here [votervoice.net].