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Statement of Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, on the Executive Order on Refugees and Migrants

The recent executive order to turn away refugees and to narrow or close our nation's doors to our migrant sisters and brothers who are fleeing hunger, hardships, violence and persecution does not represent the best of our Catholic and American values and ideals. As Catholics, we appreciate the sensitivity shown to Christians who are fleeing persecution, but we are disheartened and alarmed by actions that target and profile others because of the color of their skin, the language they speak, the religion they profess and the land they call home.

The notion that a thriving society would benefit from biased policies and practices based on ignorance, fear and a disordered nationalism corrodes the very essence of our American spirit and impoverishes our democratic life. As citizens of this great land and as member of the Catholic community, we are particularly concerned about our Muslim sisters and brothers whose lives are becoming increasingly difficult and whose safety is being threatened by this recent turn of events in our structures of government and society.

Welcoming the stranger, the immigrant, and the refugee have been long-standing hallmarks of our American way of life and religious convictions. Over the years, civic, government, religious institutions, and organizations in our nation and region have trusted the thorough vetting process in place, and together have labored to help resettle families, men, women and children from many parts of the world. And, in our experience of integrating our migrant and refugee sisters and brothers into our common way of life, we have seen our families, neighborhoods, cities, and faith communities flourish.

The responsibility to welcome and care for the migrant and refugee are not only public and social virtues, but also find common ground and resolve in faith: "Come you that are blessed by my Father...for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25: 34-35). This Gospel mandate to actively reach out and welcome the stranger has guided our Catholic social values and practices for centuries. Throughout our Catholic tradition, we have learned to be attentive to the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. In faith, we have come to recognize and know the face of Christ in the migrant and refugee.

Furthermore, as Catholics we believe that our responsibility to help the most vulnerable means helping those in need, especially those who in our day are forcibly being displaced from their homes and are experiencing incredible difficulties. Our commitment to life and religious

freedom teaches us that we must welcome all faiths and cultures at our shores and doors, mindful of the inherent dignity found in them and ready to grow in God's grace. In faith, we believe that each person, regardless of their official status, is made in the image and likeness of God, and as such deserves to be treated with respect, justice, and love.

In this spirit of compassion and solidarity, today, I join my brother Catholic bishops, religious and civic leaders, the larger Catholic community and people of good will in opposing the executive order which seeks to narrow and close the doors to our most vulnerable migrants and refugees. The Archdiocese of St. Louis will continue to be a place of welcome, service, and mutual hospitality, especially to the suffering and most vulnerable among us.

Let us hear the words of Pope Francis anew: "No one can remain insensitive to the inequalities that persist in the world! Everybody, according to his or her particular opportunities and responsibilities, should be able to make a personal contribution to putting an end to so many social injustices. The culture of selfishness and individualism that often prevails in our society is not, I repeat, not what builds up and leads to a more habitable world: rather, it is the culture of solidarity that does so; the culture of solidarity means seeing others not as rivals or statistics, but brothers and sisters. And we are all brothers and sisters!"