



## SAINT MARGARET MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

COMMUNITY • CELEBRATION • COMPASSION

September 26, 2021

Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
3801 Nebraska Avenue NW  
Washington D.C. 20016

Honorable Kamala D. Harris  
Vice President of the United States  
White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear President Biden, Vice-President Harris, Secretary Mayorkas,  
and Secretary Blinken:

We, leaders of a Haiti Ministry in a Florida Catholic parish, write today expressing grave concern about the treatment of Haitians seeking refuge in our nation. As our Catholic Church observes a World Day for Migrants and Refugees this week (September 26th), Pope Francis challenges us to no longer think of “them” and “us” but to work “Towards an ever wider ‘we.’”

Over nearly 20 years of partnering with rural parishes in Haiti, our five working groups have collaborated with Haitians to create sustainable development in Economic Empowerment, Education, Faith Sharing, Health, and Peace & Conflict Resolution. Our partners in Haiti demonstrate key values of Haitian culture: faith, perseverance, sense of community, and resilience; we have profound respect for the work they have done to improve their communities. However, we also have observed the enormous challenges that face these communities- poverty, civil unrest and corruption, and natural disasters. These challenges have worsened due to the pandemic, presidential assassination and rise of gang violence, and the earthquake and hurricane this year. Our associates report that it is increasingly unsafe to travel to the cities and increasingly challenging to meet daily needs for the community. As your administration acknowledged in the decision to extend Temporary Protective Status to Haitians residing in the U.S. before July 29th, the country is not in a position to be able to re-integrate citizens who have emigrated.

Recent actions using Title 42 as justification to return vulnerable individuals and families to the dire situation in their homeland is unethical and violates the human dignity of the migrants reaching our southern border. Painting people seeking safety in our country

as threats to public health is inaccurate and dehumanizing. We believe it is a violation of international law and human rights to deny the vast majority of asylum seekers the opportunity to share their credible fears about returning to their home country.

We have a responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us, who include Haitians seeking entry to the United States. The situation in their homeland is untenable and unsafe. The mistreatment we have been observing appears to reflect underlying racist attitudes that infect and weaken our nation. The United States must move "Towards an ever wider 'we'" by:

- Ceasing deportation of Haitian refugees & allowing their asylum claims to be heard;
- Stopping use of force against refugees at the border & establishing accountability for border patrol agents;
- Addressing the root causes, including U.S. policy interventions, by respecting the role and leadership of civil society and supporting a legitimate transition to democracy in Haiti.

We respectfully plead with you to prioritize humane and respectful treatment of Haitians and other vulnerable people seeking refuge at our borders.

Sincerely,

St. Margaret Mary Catholic Church Haiti Ministry

Reverend Richard M. Walsh, Pastor

Katie Walsh, Principal, St. Margaret Mary Catholic School

John Rife, Haiti Ministry Director

Kenneth Firling, Director Emeritus & Consultant

Anne Landrum, Economic Empowerment Committee Coordinator

Meghan Collins, ND, CNM, ARNP, Education Committee Coordinator

Sr. Virginia West, SNDdeN, Faith Sharing Committee Coordinator

Lisa Meier, RN, BSN, FCN Parish Mission Nurse, Health Committee Coordinator

Sr. Rosemary Finnegan, OP, Peace Committee Coordinator

Jean Bony Delorge, In-Country Director of Operations