



October 16, 2012

Dear Father, Pastoral Coordinator, and School Principal,

On June 15, 2012, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced a deferred action on the deportation of young people who entered the U.S. before the age of 16. Individuals who demonstrate that they meet certain criteria will be eligible to receive deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and will be able to apply for work authorization. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began accepting applications for consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) on August 15, 2012.

Deferred action permits an individual to remain in the United States temporarily with legal status but does not provide a path to permanent residence or citizenship.

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supports DACA, the bishops continue to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. They understand that DACA is temporary, uncertain, and holds risks for those who apply for deferred action. At present, no one knows how the government will evaluate the applications or how it will use the information provided by applicants. Although we support the goals of the DACA program, as it would provide some protection from deportation (and so keep families together), we urge potential applicants to seek legal counsel before submitting any paperwork to the government. Information about legal assistance can be found at www.cliniclegal.org or www.nwirp.org.

There are a number of things parishes and schools can do to help to people wanting to apply for DACA. Here are some suggestions:

- Childhood arrivals will be searching for sacramental and school records that will help them meet eligibility criteria for deferred action. We encourage parishes and schools to provide them with the records they need.
- The immigrant rights organizations are seeking meeting space to hold DACA information sessions. Please consider making parish and schools facilities available if approached by such organizations.
- Publish and/or distribute information about the information sessions in your area in parish and school bulletins.

We know it will be a difficult decision for many young people to make. Therefore, we want to offer spiritual support for these individuals and families to make a good discernment. Enclosed with this letter, you will find a prayer for the spiritual support of childhood arrivals.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of SeattleMost Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle

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PRAYER

“Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me” (Mk 9:37).

Loving LORD, in your infinite love and compassion for children, we invoke your divine protection for childhood arrivals who came to this country at an early age.

As they seek to come out of the shadows of uncertainty and into the light of a better future, we pray that you pour out your Spirit upon them, so that they may dream of better educational opportunities and reach their full potential as sons and daughters of God.

Provide them with your wisdom to find their way through the uncertainties of their migrant journey and the legal process set forth by the government. We also pray that they may find the spiritual support they need from parents, family, friends, schools and parishes.

In this time of discernment and need, bring them spiritual comfort.

For this we pray through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

Amen.