Dear Father,

I am writing to you as a member of the parish, about an important opportunity to join with other Catholic churches across the country in praying for immigrant children. **I would like to invite you and my fellow parishioners to join in a brief 5-10 minute prayer for immigrant children immediately following Sunday Masses.** Below I will explain why. I hope this meets with your approval.

Like many Catholics, I was shocked by the recent images of children detained in cages, separated from family, and living in unsanitary, unhealthy conditions in detention centers on our southern border. I was horrified to learn that, since December, seven children have died in U.S. custody or immediately after.

Our church leaders Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Migration have spoken out about this tragic injustice, calling the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions “appalling and unacceptable for any person in U.S. custody, but particularly for children, who are uniquely vulnerable.” They went on to say in a statement on June 26 that, “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.”

More and more Catholics are speaking out on behalf of the immigrant children.

On July 18, a coalition of Catholic organizations held a “Catholic Day of Action for Immigrant Children” in Washington, D.C. More than 200 people came to the prayer vigil at the U.S. Capitol Building. They held pictures of the children who has died, read Scripture, and sang and prayed for an end to the inhumane treatment of children. A group of 70 Catholic sisters, priests, brothers, and lay people also engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience, praying the rosary while they were arrested inside a Senate building. There were many news reports about it in the secular and Catholic press.

Seven Catholic bishops sent statements of support for the Catholic action. Among them, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso wrote, "Do not tire in your vigil or grow timid in your witness today and may a lack of compassion never dry your tears or harden your hearts. For with the Lord we are building that temple, wherein there will be an end to suffering and separation and estrangement, and there will be justice overflowing and enough for all." I am moved by his words, and determined that we not tire in our vigil.

Father, I would like to create an opportunity for the members of our parish to pray together for immigrant children and for an end to their inhumane treatment and I would like to invite you to join us! I have attached the text for the prayer, created by the coalition that led the Catholic Day of Action in Washington. I ask that an announcement about this be printed in the bulletin and included in the announcements before the final blessings at Mass. I invite you to lead the prayer, but I am happy to do so if you are unable. I would appreciate your guidance on finding the best location to gather together to pray, maybe in the vestibule, or just outside of the church.

The plight of immigrant children is an urgent situation that speaks to the core of our identity as Catholics and as Americans. Thank you for considering this invitation to pray for these littlest among us.

In Christ,