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**STATEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP NELSON J. PÉREZ REGARDING
THE NEED FOR BALANCED, COMPASSIONATE, AND
COMPREHENSIVE IMMIGRATION REFORM**

Many of the challenges involved with immigration have been at the forefront of local and national consciousness over the past several days. With sadness, I have witnessed a broad variety of reactions to this topic marked by heightened anxiety, fear, anger, and polarization.

As Catholics, we discern immigration matters guided by prayerful hearts in a manner that seeks justice, charity, and dignity for all human beings while embracing a shared responsibility to ensure the safety of our communities and our country.

Christ's call to welcome the stranger and His commandment stating, "Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me," (Mt. 25:40) are at the heart of our calling to see the face of Jesus in all those we meet and to be an instrument of His compassionate love. This fundamental precept compelling us to love is especially important when we encounter those on the margins of society, including migrants and refugees.

The Philadelphia region has a long history of welcoming people from other lands who are fleeing oppression and seeking better opportunities for themselves and their families. Our area is home to many immigrants. Some are recent arrivals. Others have lived and worked here for years. All of them are our brothers and sisters. They were created in the image and likeness of God. They deserve dignity, respect, compassion, and fairness.

At the same time, we recognize the need of civil authorities to enact measures that provide for the common good. Those measures include immigration policies that safeguard the life, liberty, and property of all those who call the United States of America home, natural born citizens and those working toward citizenship alike.

Serious and carefully thought out immigration policy reforms are needed that will blend dignity, mercy, and justice. It is my hope that such reforms will prevent the separation of families and abuses committed by traffickers, provide for a timelier and more cost effective process to achieve citizenship, and allow law enforcement to deter those who would cause harm to our society from entering the country.

Reaching that point will require wisdom, courage, and a peaceful spirit from our elected officials

and from each of us. We turn to our loving Father in prayer.

Almighty God,

We seek to better understand the issues and concerns that confront our society, and how the Gospel calls us to respond as faithful citizens.

We ask for eyes that are free from blindness so that we might see and hear each other as equal brothers and sisters with dignity.

We ask for minds and hearts that carefully discern the actions of civic leaders. May they hear your Word and live out your loving example.

We ask for the courage to voice support for policies that bring us closer to your Kingdom.

Hear our prayers for wisdom and peace throughout our land, now and always.

Grant all this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

*Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia*

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