

Dear Friends,

This past week the decision was announced that the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program would be rescinded. For months the leadership of our Church in the United States has sought support for this program. Since its inception in 2012 more than 780,000 youth received protection from the DACA program by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The program provided no legal status or government benefits but did provide recipients with temporary employment authorization to work in the United States and reprieve from deportation, as well as authorizing them to study.

In response to this decision a statement was released by the president and vice president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo and Archbishop José Gomez. It reads:

"The cancellation of the DACA program is reprehensible. It causes unnecessary fear for DACA youth and their families. These youth entered the U.S. as minors and often know America as their only home. The Catholic Church has long watched with pride and admiration as DACA youth live out their daily lives with hope and a determination to flourish and contribute to society: continuing to work and provide for their families, continuing to serve in the military, and continuing to receive an education. Now, after months of anxiety and fear about their futures, these brave young people face deportation. This decision is unacceptable and does not reflect who we are as Americans.

The Church has recognized and proclaimed the need to welcome young people: 'Whoever welcomes one of these children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me' (Mark 9:37). Our nation has done the opposite of how Scripture calls us to respond. It is a step back from the progress that we need to make as a country. Today's actions represent a heartbreaking moment in our history that shows the absence of mercy and good will, and a short-sighted vision for the future. DACA youth are woven into the fabric of our country and of our Church, and are, by every social and human measure, American youth.

We strongly urge Congress to act and immediately resume work toward a legislative solution. We pledge our support to work on finding an expeditious means of protection for DACA youth.

As people of faith, we say to DACA youth – regardless of your immigration status, you are children of God and welcome in the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church supports you and will advocate for you."

May we join our bishops and others to urge Congress to move quickly on a solution that allows these youth to remain in the United States, the only place they have known as home.

Peace and blessings,
Fr. John