

Statement from Bishop Bernard J. Harrington
RE: Immigration Raids in Diocese of Winona
December 19, 2006

On Dec. 12, 2006, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patron saint of the Americas, the U.S. Government executed an immigration raid in Worthington. Families in the Austin and Albert Lea areas were also affected. Many questions remain about the type of treatment these packing plant workers received and the appropriateness of the methods used during the raids.

Families have been separated, children left without parents, and households left without a breadwinner. Families that have lost their breadwinner now face a winter of uncertainty with no idea how long detainees will be held. Our diocesan family can help to relieve some of this burden by assisting with food, medicine, heating bills and rent. As a diocesan family, we must respond in love.

To address the consequences now facing immigrant families affected by the raid, the Diocese of Winona has established the *“Holy Family Relief Fund – Catholic Charities.”* The diocese has made the first contribution of \$10,000 and I am asking parishes to commit to a contribution during this Christmas season and beyond. Perhaps parishes will make a donation from a charity fund, or donate the money that is left for the Holy Family at the Crib during the Christmas season. Perhaps parishes will hold a special collection, and also ask families to make donations as well.

Parishes who wish assistance for families from the Holy Family Relief Fund should contact Ms. Suzanne Belongia at (507) 454-2270 or by email at sbelongia@ccwinona.org. Ms. Belongia will work with parishes to meet their specific needs.

As we prepare to celebrate the most Holy of Families this Christmas season, let us all remember the families in the Worthington, Austin/Albert Lea deaneries who have been fractured by this attempt to enforce the laws of a broken immigration system. And may we all work and pray for the time when our country will address meaningful immigration reform that secures our borders and welcomes all God's children to work with dignity and to provide for a better life for their families within our borders.

Donations should be sent to “Holy Family Relief Fund – Catholic Charities, c/o Diocese of Winona, PO Box 588, Winona, MN 55987.