

Upon Reflection. . . A Message from Fr. Gordon

12 November 2019

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:33-34

My Dear Friends in Christ,

This past weekend I did what I have seldom (if ever?) done before I went shopping for children's clothes!! My (successful!) efforts were part of an Outreach Committee project in coordination with Students Homelessness Initiative Project of Frederick County (SHIP). Together with several parishioners, I braved a Saturday crowd at Target in search of tees and jeans and hoodies and sneakers and socks, all in sizes I can't remember ever wearing! At one point as I'm sure I appeared both confused and dazed, a young mother, touched with compassion, directed me to the right aisle marked girls' size 7!! Ah, the look of knowing experience on her face! God bless you, whoever you were and from whatever heavenly realm you descended!

Later, as I retrieved my purchases and began sorting them, I couldn't help but be struck at just how small these items were! Was I ever that tiny?? At the same time I reflected on the children who would wear these new clothes and how much pleasure, I hoped, they would receive as they went off to school looking like the other kids, not having to feel different because circumstances have made them, at least for a time, homeless. I was happy to imagine how happy they would be!

These faceless children with their new clothes were on my mind again as this week began, as I was reminded of the fate of other children who I have not met yet who also are bright with hope and eager with promise, even though they too live under uncertain circumstances. Much older now than the ones I shopped for, these are the children of illegal immigrants brought to this country when they were very young Americans in every sense of the word but birth who were enrolled in the DACA program (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

Beneficiaries of an Obama-era executive order, under DACA they would have received a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit in the U.S. (To be eligible for the program, they could not have felonies or serious misdemeanors on their records.) Popularly known as Dreamers many of whom have working careers or are serving in our military over 700,000 DACA recipients currently reside in this country.

The Supreme Court has just this week accepted a suit brought by the Trump Administration to end this program. If successful, it will mean that these thousands of hard-working, law-abiding Americans, who have already contributed so much to their adopted country to us will be subject to deportation. Brought here in their innocence, they proudly have made this land their own and have served it with integrity and purpose. Although not officially citizens, they have shown what true citizenship looks like. They are some of the best we have.

I'm praying that the Supreme Court will uphold the constitutionality of the decision that inaugurated the DACA program and so hold out a future for the Dreamers. Barring that, I pray that the Congress will (finally) see the wisdom in passing comprehensive immigration legislation that will both include and enshrine such a needed program. We must not lose, by lack of compassion or imagination, these precious children who have dared to dream the American Dream. I believe we must treat them, as scripture commands, as our native born, and love them as ourselves.

Many Blessings,
Fr. Gordon +