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HARTFORD, Conn. — July 11, 2019
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Connecticut's Catholic bishops, in a joint message to the state's Catholics, called for a "complete overhaul" of U.S. immigration policy.

The July 10 letter was sparked by the photo showing the bodies of two Salvadorans, Oscar Alberto Martinez Ramirez, and his daughter, Angie Valeria, both of whom drowned trying to cross the Rio Grande from Mexico to the United States.

"Other immigrants have crossed the border with their lives, but have been captured and are now detained in overcrowded conditions as a result of political gridlock in our nation's capital," said the message, which was released by the Connecticut Catholic Public Affairs Conference in Hartford.

"Those responsible in government need to undertake an examination of conscience as to what they have done and have failed to do when it comes to respect for human persons and the enactment of fair and balanced legislation," the bishops said.

"This overhaul needs to ensure a welcome for immigrants in keeping with our history and laws as a land of immigrants as well as the integrity of our borders."

The bishops said, "In recent decades U.S. governments led by both of our major parties have fallen woefully short of enacting immigration reform and of honoring the basic humanity of migrants and refugees."

They added, "According to the U.S. Border Patrol, over the last 20 years there has been an average of 357 immigrant deaths annually in our southwest border sectors." They noted, though, "these past months have been marked by escalating tensions at our southern border."

While the bishops offered no policy prescriptions, they said that beyond whatever the U.S. government does to enact new laws, "the governments of other nations also need to be encouraged and aided where necessary to remedy the conditions that force people to flee their homeland."

The bishops said, "As one nation under God, not only founded by immigrants, but made what it is in large part by immigrants, the United States can and must do better."

They added, "Those fleeing the hazardous conditions of their homeland to make the perilous journey to the safety and freedom of America are currently facing treatment that undermines our shared values of freedom and belief in human dignity."

The message was signed by Archbishop Leonard Blair and Auxiliary Bishop Juan Miguel Betancourt of Hartford; Bishops Frank Caggiano of Bridgeport and Michael Cote of Norwich; and Ukrainian Catholic Bishop Paul Chomnycky of Stamford.

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