

Good afternoon Council Members,

My name is Fr. John Olenick and I am the pastor of Visitation BVM Church located in Kensington.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to with you about the city's current agreement with ICE and why it is morally unacceptable to people of faith and good will.

Laws are meant to serve the common good of society. It is their aim to strengthen the bonds of community.

The current relationship between the city and ICE does none of those things. In fact, it does the exact opposite. As it stands, ICE Holds bring division to families through deportations, do not follow due process and promote distrust between residents and law enforcement.

I witness this reality on a regular basis in my parish and neighborhood. Husbands separated from their wives, victims of robberies afraid to call the police out of fear of being deported and children traumatized after watching their parents taken away in handcuffs. Many of these same children are to foster care and suffer many emotional and psychological wounds.

This cannot continue for the good of our neighborhoods and city.

In the book of Leviticus, taken from the Jewish Scriptures, chapter 19, verses 33-34 we read, "When strangers sojourn with you in your land, you shall do them no wrong, the strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as natives among you, and you love them as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."

This call to hospitality and divine acknowledgement of the human rights of all people should spurn us on to discontinue the unjust agreement between the city and ICE. ICE Holds do nothing to bring about the kind of city all of us want to call home.

The City of Brotherly and Sisterly Love can no longer be a part of this unfair and immoral relationship which promotes fear and ruptures the bonds of family and communities. Philadelphia is better than this.

Respectfully submitted: Fr. John Olenick, C.Ss.R.
Pastor, Visitation BVM Church
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