

On this date, July 7, in 2023, the US White House announced the destruction of the last of the declared chemical weapons in the U.S., making a major step toward a world free of these weapons. Only Egypt, North Korea, and South Sudan have neither signed nor acceded to chemical weapon destruction as documented in the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

Catholic Social Teaching's "Just War" guidance is clear- Armed forces should strive to do no harm to noncombatants purposefully and not destroy the enemy's countryside, cities or economy simply for the sake of punishment, retaliation or vengeance. (Catechism of the Catholic Church Paragraph 2309):

<https://www.catholiccrossreference.online/catechism/#!/search/2307-2309/fn/h607.1>

There is always a human cost of war. Too often, the innocent are terrorized, abused and considered as expendable means to an end. When that happens, the innocent have no option other than to flee to a safer place. It is only natural to do so.

We have all seen the devastating results of war, terrorism, ruthless dictatorships, and natural disasters on innocent men, women and children. The news clips of infants barely hanging onto life, simply due to where they were born, continues to haunt me. I can assure you that I would do anything I could to get my family to a safe place that provided a chance for a future if I faced a situation similar to what we hear from our local immigrants and refugees.

The six counties served by Catholic Charities of Stockton (San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Calaveras, Tuolumne, Alpine, and Mono) provide a safe home for refugees and immigrants from various parts of the world. A significant number live in Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties and more arrive each month. In the past three years, Stanislaus County has received over 1,200 refugees of which most are from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Mexico, South America, and Ukraine.

Like many new arrivals, these immigrants and refugees experienced unimaginable hardships in their native countries. Though their status may vary, one thing these individuals have in common is that they are seeking safety and opportunity to move their lives forward. This includes people with documented refugee status, those seeking or recently granted asylum, victims of human trafficking, survivors of torture, Afghan translators and guides who assisted the US military, and more. Many need assistance navigating language differences, the lack of transferable employment skills and cultural adaptation

Catholic Charities serves as a unique resource in assisting them to transition into their new lives. We offer services including (not limited to):

- Case management for the infirm or disabled, caregiver services, help transitioning from acute care to home, transportation services for the elderly
- Legal assistance to Immigrants and asylees, aid in disaster relief, and education and advocacy for the protection of our environment
- Assistance in obtaining access to quality health/dental care and healthy nutrition,
- Limited assistance to qualifying persons experiencing a one-time financial crisis such as an overdue utility payment.

- Family wellness/prevention and early intervention services to families in crisis, parent support services and family counseling

As people of faith- as human beings-our responsibility is to serve and care for one another...especially those who are vulnerable, oppressed and marginalized. We are to welcome the newcomers into our community.

Grant funding comes and goes. Personal and business/organization unrestricted donations wax and wane. But... as long as wars continue to be fought, disasters continue to occur, evil continues to eat at the fabric of healthy social order... the need does not diminish. Catholic Charities will to serve the community in the best way we can with the resources we have.

We are so very blessed to have staff, volunteers, supporters and donors who help us to do just that!

Blessings,
Deacon Mike

"Peace is not merely the absence of war but an active environment that creates dynamic, robust and thriving societies where human potential is optimised." - -The Institute for Economics & Peace