



Roman Catholic
Diocese of Tucson

Office of the Bishop

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July 3, 2019

Mr. Chuck Huckelberry
County Administrator
Pima County
130 W. Congress St., 10th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

Dear Mr. Huckelberry,

For the past several months, Catholic Community Services, along with their faith-based and community partners, has been searching for a replacement respite and travel processing facility for asylum seekers deposited in Tucson by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agencies. The facility currently in use, the former Benedictine Monastery on County Club Road, is privately owned and scheduled for reconstruction by its owner beginning in August. The owner has been extremely gracious and generous, allowing the community to use the Monastery since January of this year.

Our local community has been responding to this humanitarian challenge since 2014. There is no sign that the DHS drop-offs of asylum seekers, primarily from Central America, is going to abate. If the Tucson and Pima County community do not respond and provide aid to these desperate people then they will be left on the streets of Tucson to fend for themselves. We have no choice but to provide the much-needed aid, which is a moral imperative of our faith.

The team working on this new location determined that any replacement facility needed to meet the following criteria:

- Large enough to provide safe, sanitary overnight quarters initially for at least 200 people, with the potential to increase to 300 people assisted on a daily basis.
- Capacity for at least 50 volunteers per shift to provide humanitarian aid and travel processing.
- Immediately available and in good condition, not requiring extensive or expensive rehabilitation before guests can be accommodated.
- Affordable leasing terms for a minimum of one year with availability for the length of time DHS intends to release asylum seekers in the Pima County region.

- A centralized location to reduce the commute time for volunteers, and in proximity to both the Tucson International Airport and the downtown bus station in order to allow guests to make their way to their final destination.

After reviewing dozens of potential sites, the team working on this relocation has determined that the northern unused sections of the Pima County Juvenile Justice Complex on East Ajo Way meets every criterion above and is by far our best option. We are requesting that Pima County lease this facility to Catholic Community Services for a nominal fee.

As we make this request we want to emphasize that the asylum seekers are in the United States legally and have been released by a DHS agency to Catholic Community Services or another partner in order to remain in the US while their asylum claim is processed. We also wish to note that very few of the asylum seekers remain in Tucson. The overwhelming majority are traveling to other parts of the country where they have family or sponsors awaiting them.

We join with our other Christian, Jewish and Muslim brethren as we practice the call of our faiths to give food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, and welcome to the stranger. This opportunity to be a part of Tucson's greater community, faith communities, and government agencies to meet the needs of those who come to us in the midst of what is for many a life-or-death crisis is one we hope you will answer with an unambiguous and generous yes.

As always, please be assured of my prayers along with my gratitude for your service to our community.

Very Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward J. Weisenburger". The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a small cross symbol.

Most Reverend Edward J. Weisenburger
Bishop of Tucson