

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America takes stance against US immigration policy separating families

The Trump administration reversed its controversial policy, which saw thousands of immigrant children separated from their families at the US-Mexico border and placed into holding cages, late this week, but only after intense outrage and protest on a national and international level.

Among the institutions taking a stance against the policy, was the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, who condemned US Attorney General Jeff Sessions' use of the Bible to justify their actions, during which he suggested that God supports the government in separating immigrant parents from their children.

"I would cite to you the Apostle Paul and his clear and wise command in Romans 13, to obey the laws of the government because God has ordained the government for his purposes," Sessions said last week while responding to criticism.

"Orderly and lawful pro-

cesses are good in themselves. Consistent and fair application of the law is in itself a good and moral thing, and that protects the weak and protects the lawful."

In response, the Archdiocese issued a public statement on its website, expressing grave concern over the matter, claiming the quotation was "used out of context".

"In recent days, the words of St Paul in the 13th chapter of his Epistle to the Romans have been circulating in the news. We are concerned and alarmed at the use of this biblical quote being used out of context to justify the strict application of a policy occurring at our southern border, which is detrimental to family life," the statement reads on the Archdiocese's official website.

It went on to cite Ephesians 3:14, a scripture which highlights the importance of the family, and its sanctity – something the policy goes



The Trump administration's use of a Bible passage to justify its controversial 'zero tolerance' immigration policy has attracted the attention of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, which has issued a public statement of condemnation.

against.

"The numerous challenges of today's world weaken the already strained bonds of every modern family. Family – a divine institution (Ephesians 3:14) – is something that we as Orthodox Christians cherish and hold as sacred. Furthermore, when our Lord came into this world as a human being, he entered it as a child and part of a fam-

ily. As a special creation of God the Father, no family deserves to be separated."

The Archdiocese condemned the policy, as an "unfortunate situation" and expressed its hopes for a "swift and just solution".

"It is for peace and for a dignified and humane solution to this unfortunate situation that we, together with people of good faith across our

great nation, urgently entreat. Children should not, under any circumstances, be punished for things that are beyond their control. Our hearts go out to those suffering under these terrible conditions. We pray for them, that their families soon be restored, and pray that the proper authorities find a swift and just solution to this unfortunate and very painful situation."

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America was not the only denomination in the US to put pressure on the government over the policy.

Even before the Attorney General referenced the Bible, evangelist Franklin Graham, an outspoken Trump supporter, called it a "disgrace".

"It's terrible to see families ripped apart and I don't support that one bit," Graham told the *Christian Broadcasting Network*.

Meanwhile, president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and archbishop of the Galveston-Houston Archdiocese in Texas Cardinal Daniel DiNardo called the policy as "immoral".

"Separating babies from their mothers is not the answer and is immoral," he said.

President Donald Trump has since signed an executive order, which will see families kept together while they are detained. The fate of the children that have already been separated from their families is still unclear.

MIGRATION STORIES BRIDGING THE GENERATIONAL GAP



A student's poem capturing the similarities between separate generations migrating to Australia has been chosen for the annual Spirit of Hellenism Award.

South Oakleigh Secondary College student Kyri Derzotis, 17, migrated to Australia with her family six years ago, and entered the competition to acknowledge the trials and tribulations many experienced on their journey to and in their adopted country.

FronDitha Care sponsors one of the categories of the awards and invites students to interview members of the FronDitha Care family to help with their entry.

Drawing from her grandparents' stories of migration and interviewing FronDitha Care volunteer Board Director Paul Mavroudis, she decided to write the poem 'A home out of a house'.

"They left their homeland to give their children the best they could, although it was a risk, even all these years later, everyone agrees they did good," she wrote in her winning entry.

Presented with the \$250 prize on Monday by FronDitha Care's CEO George Lekakis AO, Kyri was

humbled by the acknowledgment.

"For me the poem is a way to give a voice to all migrants, regardless of where they have come from, so their stories are heard," she said.

Mr Lekakis congratulated the Year 11 student on her eloquence and being able to convey the story of migration through numerous generations.

"Her own migrant journey made it easy for her to relate to someone of a completely different generation, and that is a wonderful way to bridge the communication gap we sometimes see between generations," Mr Lekakis said.

The competition is open to people aged 15 to 25, and aims to record, present and preserve stories of migration, all while building a bridge from one generation to the next.

The 2018 Spirit of Hellenism Award recipients:

Delphi Bank Prize: Alex Vounisios

FronDitha Care Prize: Kyri Derzotis

Pammessinian Brotherhood Prize: Evan Koukounaras

The Olympian Society Prize: Angeliki Stamatopoulou

Pancretan Brotherhood Prize: Efthymia Delichristou



FronDitha Care CEO George Lekakis with the Spirit of Hellenism Award recipient Kyri Derzotis.