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Our salvation lies in aiding the world's most vulnerable

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The current mood in our country, as typified by our President Trump, is in direct opposition to the spirit of President Reagan's, "Mr. Gorbachov, tear down this wall." Instead we have a rabble-rousing, "Citizens, let's build up these walls — and tear down the Statue of Liberty while we're at it!"

We are a nation of immigrants, all of us, except the remnant of indigenous still surviving our European conquest. Many of us immigrants were fleeing wars, famines, religious persecutions. And this continues to the present day, much of it now caused in great part by our own exercise of global power and military might.

Aren't these newcomers dangerous, in this world of War on Terror? The Cato Institute is a very conservative Libertarian think tank. The Feb. 11 Port Huron Times Herald cited a recent report by them: "... out of more than 3 million refugees admitted to the U.S. from 1975 to 2015, three committed terrorist acts that killed Americans. They were [anti-Castro] Cuban refugees in the 1970s."

Studies show that crime rates among even unauthorized immigrants are lower than those among native-born Americans.

What should be the response of Christians who strive to follow the Gospel? The March 5 New York Times hints at a resurrection of the 1980s civilly disobedient sanctuary movement, which welcomed the refugees of our Central American wars of the time. In that story, Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York, a Democrat, pledged cooperation if public safety was threatened, but "what we will not do," he said, "is turn our N.Y.P.D. officers into immigration agents."

Some of our immigrants no longer want to stay here, no longer feel safe, and are leaving north to more stable Canada. The U.S. administration is threatening the five or so major cities that have stated they would be sanctuaries for refugees, with cut-off of federal funds.

The reaction of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to the Jan. 27, 2017, executive order banning travel from seven predominantly Muslim nations to the U.S. was this: "It is our conviction as followers of the Lord Jesus that welcoming the stranger and protecting the

vulnerable lie at the core of the Christian life. And so, to our Muslim brothers and sisters and all people of faith, we stand with you and welcome you.”

Archbishop Garcia-Siller of San Antonio added this in his formal statement “While being promoted as a response to safety concerns in this country, these are unprecedented announcements that will punish the majority of immigrants who want to come to America — the land of the free — for a better future.

On Wednesday, the immigration and refugee clinical program at Harvard Law School issued a report stating that Mr. Trump’s executive orders on immigration made the United States “not a safe country of asylum” for people fleeing persecution and violence.

In a letter sent to President Trump prior to his inauguration, Pope Francis wrote, “Under your leadership, may America’s stature continue to be measured above all by its concern for the poor, the outcast and those in need who, like Lazarus, stand before our door.” In this moment of our political history we should read again Luke’s account of the rich man, and Lazarus who lived at his gate. The gate and wall in this world, become the chasm between heaven and hell in the next.

The Gospel reading at Monday’s mass was from Matt 25, the Last Judgment scene, “Whatsoever you did for the least of these ...” Thus Jesus states the criteria for our collective and individual salvation.