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Archbishop Coakley on anticipated arrival of immigrants at Fort Sill: “The Church is concerned for the pastoral needs of these children”

OKLAHOMA CITY (June 16, 2014) – The city of Lawton, Oklahoma, continues to anticipate the arrival of up to 1,200 unaccompanied immigrant children at Fort Sill, as a part of a federal effort to provide material and legal assistance to more than 47,000 unaccompanied minors apprehended at the border since October.

Hundreds of federal workers will also temporarily live in hotels and rental houses in Lawton as they try to reunite the children with their families or find them a sponsor. Those children who do not qualify for asylum or other relief, who do not have family members legally in the United States or who are unable to find sponsors will likely be deported to their home countries.

Today, the Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, said the Church is concerned for the pastoral needs of all of these immigrants.

“It is my understanding that, while the children are at Fort Sill, they will be properly fed, clothed and sheltered – and I hope and pray that is the case,” the archbishop said. “As the capable staff of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City assess how they may offer humanitarian and legal assistance to these immigrants, my concern is also for their spiritual needs.”

“We offer our prayers and presence to these children, trusting that the federal workers who are providing for their material care will also allow our local pastors to come to those who would welcome their pastoral care,” he continued.

“While nations have a sovereign right and solemn obligation to secure their borders, the Church herself transcends borders and stands ready at all times and in all places to extend the compassion and care of Jesus Christ to all those in need,” he added.

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The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City is the Catholic Church in central and western Oklahoma. Our sacred purpose, as the people of the archdiocese, is to joyfully witness to our Catholic faith through the teaching, sanctifying, and governing ministry of Christ and His Church so that the Body of Christ is made present, the universal call to holiness proclaimed and all people are welcomed into the promise of eternal life.