

March 31, 2007

A Statement from Bishop Leo Frade

On Wednesday morning we all watched with great sadness the tragedy of dozens of human beings jumping from a rickety wooden boat into the waters off Hallandale Beach after a long and arduous trip. They were escaping misery and chaos in search of freedom and security.

We subsequently learned that they were Haitian men, women and children who had apparently spent more than 20 days at sea with the hope of reaching South Florida safely. They were in search of a home where they could live like human beings, work to provide for their families and assist those relatives that they left behind in Haiti in unimaginable misery.

I join my voice with those of many in the faith community to call on the President of the United States to direct the Department of Homeland Security to grant temporary protected status (T.P.S.) to these and all other undocumented Haitians until the United States of America and other willing nations can help bring minimal conditions of security to their homeland. A safer and more stable situation in Haiti would facilitate foreign investments, which could provide jobs to the thousands of Haitians who today are suffering from hunger and degradation. Only by eliminating the instability, lawlessness, life-threatening poverty and lack of jobs in Haiti can we eliminate the need for desperate individuals and families from that country to risk trying to reach our shores under conditions such as those we saw this week.

The Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida includes seven Haitian congregations. Together with them I pledge on behalf of all the congregations in our diocese that we will do all in our power to assist in any effort to resettle these persons if they are granted refugee status.

Our prayers and sympathy are with the family of the young man who died in the sea trying to reach a better life, and as we begin the week in which we remember our Lord's Passion, we pray especially for the suffering people of Haiti. As we prepare to celebrate our Lord's resurrection, may we commit ourselves as a community and a nation to do all we can to help bring about a resurrection for our neighbors in Haiti.

The Right Reverend Leo Frade
Diocesan Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida