

**Homily**  
**International Farewell Mass**  
**Sunday, October 7**  
**6:00 pm**  
**St. Ambrose Cathedral**

My good friends,

I specifically wanted to have a farewell Mass with you, my international friends, with those of you who have come to Des Moines in the last 15 to 20 years. All of you have been a great inspiration to me and I wished to express gratitude to you for this and to assure you that you have a special place in my heart. And so, to –

the South Sudanese

the variety of Hispanics

the Eritreans

the Burmese

the Vietnamese

I thank you for the encouragement that you have been. I pray mightily that God will bless you as you fully settle into the American scene.

Your courage has been demonstrated by the risks you were willing to take to come to this new homeland. Especially so, did you trust in the providence of God to take care of you when so much of your destiny was out of your hands. You endured hardship, excruciating demands coming from every direction involving suffering. Most of this was accepted because of the unyielding love for your families. You, quite simply, pursued a better life for them. You were unwilling to accept compromise.

Your arrival in the United States was welcomed by agencies such as Catholic Charities and their associates who provided assistance in your accommodating to your new home. Regrettably, you have also experienced the darker side of the American character in discrimination, impatience, and denial of basic rights you enjoy as humans.

One hero that stands out for us this evening is Stephen Kim, who was the victim of cold, anonymous violence. His remarkable character, devotion to faith and family, enterprising spirit were snuffed out by senseless shooting. His memory lives on because of his example of a generous Christian. Our love and support continue to reach out to his family.

We, fellow members of the Catholic community of faith in Des Moines, are companions on your journey to integration into American society. We will stand together in the face of unjust challenge and support all in their struggle of becoming fully American. We will be with you when there are attempts to deny your basic humanity as beloved children of God made in his image and likeness.

In this journey, I acknowledge the remarkable gifts that you share as previous waves of immigrants and refugees brought to the United States in their times. You are hardworking and bring strength to the American economy. You live family values that anchor our societal stability and generate children that are healthy, balanced, productive and committed to education. You introduce into our midst attractive traditions in food, music, dance and other ways of enriching our common life.

Most of all you are people of faith committed to engaging in the life that will never end. “Eternal life means knowing Jesus Christ whom you sent.” And so you strive to deepen and intensify your faith journey, especially devoted to passing on the relationship of friendship with God to your children. The American materialistic society has an almost irresistible lure to it. But truth and happiness reside in our closeness to God and achieving that which is so meaningful and satisfying.

May Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, be our strength in keeping us on our path in the Catholic Church, in the midst of change and the constant pressure of daily routine.

As the Book of Ecclesiastes so beautifully illustrates, there is a rhythm in life and a proper season for all of our activity. We now acknowledge that reality and pass on to the next stage. We do so in gratitude that we have shared our journey the last ten years. Going forward, we are consoled with the assurance of continuing friendship in the Spirit of the Lord Jesus. Through Him, peace, truth, love and justice will prevail.