

By Joseph W. Tobin

Cardinal Tobin is the archbishop of Newark., Jan. 30, 2019

The question of the wall

Is the border wall ethical? President Trump has suggested the wall is moral and those who oppose it immoral. His critics claim the opposite.

To answer this, we have to consider its effect on humans. What harm could a border wall cause to immigrants and refugees, all of whom are equal to us in the eyes of God?

Some people who cross the border are in desperate search of work to support their families. A wall would probably drive them into more remote areas of the desert or mountains, possibly to their deaths, as the forces driving them — violence, persecution and extreme poverty — are more life threatening than a risky border crossing.

A wall would prevent asylum seekers from asking for protection at any point along our border — their right under the law — and would leave many of them at the mercy of drug cartels and other criminal groups in northern Mexico.

You must also look at the *intent* of someone who wants to construct a wall in order to determine its morality. In this case, it is clear that Mr. Trump wants to deny entry to anyone crossing the southern border, even those who have a right to cross and seek protection and are no threat.

Mr. Trump is not acting with concern for the impact of the wall on their lives, including those of children, who would remain subject to danger. He also ignores the adverse impact of the wall on the environment, landowners and border communities, like the harm it can cause to wildlife and vegetation, the livelihoods of ranchers and farmers and cross-border commerce. The way in which Mr. Trump has argued for a wall also is instructive. In trying to secure funding, he has cast all immigrants as criminals and threats to national security by spreading misleading and inaccurate information about them. His justification for the wall is based upon lies and smears against the vast majority of immigrants who are law-abiding and moral, but whom he paints as less than human.