



THE OFFICE FOR CATHOLIC SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

Of the Archdiocese of Hartford

Please forward to:

Pastors, Associate Pastors, Deacons, Liturgy Teams, Pro-Life Committees, Social Ministry/Social Concerns Committees, Religious Education and Youth Ministry Leaders, and other Parish Leadership Groups.

*You and Your Parish Are Cordially Invited
to Participate in a Global Solidarity Project.*

Four or five times each year, the calendar offers us a month of five Sundays, and this year, April is one of those months. We will provide resources on this weekend for you to use at your convenience throughout the year. In January, we chose the issue of “Human Trafficking.” Now, in this second month of five Sundays, our focus will be on the issue of **Migration**.



Photo Credit: CRS, David Snyder

The January resources focused on Human Trafficking, and you were encouraged to highlight that issue all during the month of February, leading up to the “Not for Sale” *Freedom Sunday* campaign. One of our main reasons for choosing **Migration and Immigration** for our second project is that this issue is so closely related to that of Human Trafficking, and frequently trafficking occurs specifically because of Migration. All too often it is the immigrant/migrant, searching for a better life, who becomes the target of a trafficker, and finds herself/himself trapped in slavery, with little hope of escape. **Immigration Reform** is also major concern of the United States Catholic Bishops.

Enclosed/attached you will find: suggested prayers, bulletin quotes, bulletins inserts, handouts, questions and answers, web links to Church teaching, a prayer service, and other suggested resources. We invite you to share the packet with the leaders and committees in your parish, and to make this information available to your parish community. Please feel free to contact OCSJM for more information and/or assistance at (203) 777-7279.

Sincerely,

The Archdiocesan Global Solidarity Team

Mary O’Brien, Coordinator of the OCSJM Global Solidarity Initiative

Catholics Confront Global Poverty

Migration and Our Catholic Response

*United States
Conference of
Catholic Bishops
(USCCB)*

*Catholic Relief
Services
(CRS)*

What is the Issue?

Migration has been a consistent aspect of the human experience throughout history and continues to be a defining characteristic of the United States. Migration is closely linked to economic, social and political realities that influence the decision, and often the necessity, for people to migrate. Currently close to 200 million people worldwide live outside of their country of birth. Although this number includes refugees, asylum seekers and others, economic migrants make up the largest proportion. These economic migrants — who could often be described as economically displaced people — have few other options to remain in their country and meet the basic needs of their families.

The expansion of economic globalization, characterized by interdependent economic and social relations, has created levels of wealth barely imagined in the past. However, the benefits have not been evenly distributed and often have deepened the inequalities between and within countries. (For more information about this issue see the international trade issue area of www.usccb.org/globalpoverty/.) In the context of globalization, goods and capital cross borders with increasing ease, but workers are unable to move to where job opportunities exist or to where their jobs may have moved.¹ At the same time, many wealthier countries are experiencing declining birth rates and aging populations that would lead to a labor shortage were it not for immigrant workers.

Currently, restrictive migration policies throughout the world have resulted in few avenues for legal or safe migration. Instead, many migrants experience abuse and exploitation as they travel in dangerous conditions. They are subjected to extortion and physical and sexual violence, and die of exposure, dehydration or drowning. Many migrants have little access to protection, legal representation or basic services.

U.S. immigration laws and policies have become increasingly restrictive and even harmful to some immigrants and asylum seekers. Between 10 and 12 million people in the U.S. live on the margins of our society for lack of proper immigration documentation. Immigrants who are legal permanent residents in the U.S. who want to reunite with close family members must often wait 10 or more years for visas for their relatives. Enforcement strategies employed along our southern border have resulted in thousands of deaths. Asylum seekers who flee persecution in their home countries and look for safe haven in the U.S. instead find themselves detained as criminals.

¹ According to Juan Somalia, the former Director of the International Labor Organization: "If you look at Globalization from the point of view of people's concerns, its single biggest failure is its inability to create jobs where people live."

Why Should People of Faith Care?

The Catholic Church's teaching on migration is based on a commitment to promote and defend human dignity with particular attention to the most vulnerable. The Church outlines a number of principles on migration that are connected to poverty, including: ²

- ***People have the right to find opportunities within their own homeland: they have the “right not to migrate.”*** This principle emphasizes that all people have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and not be compelled to migrate.
- ***People have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families where conditions do not exist to meet their basic needs.*** Our current immigration system often separates families for years as migrants take great risks to find work and send resources to families left behind. Even when a family member is able to establish U.S. legal permanent residency and attempts to reunite with loved ones, visa delays often keep husbands and wives, parents and children, apart for years. The number of unaccompanied minors attempting to migrate to the U.S. to reunite with family has risen in recent years. Minors are particularly vulnerable: there are increasing reports of children disappearing in transit and, in some cases, becoming victims of human trafficking.
- ***Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.*** The Church does not promote an “open border” immigration policy, but rather policies that ensure safe, legal, and orderly immigration, and that address the needs of both migrant families and impacted communities.
- ***The human dignity and human rights of all migrants should be respected.*** Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity and human rights that should be respected. Enforcement and border control practices should respect the human dignity of migrants.

What Response is Needed?

The Church works to reduce the need for people to migrate and to protect those people who have little choice but to do so. The long-term goal is equitable development for all peoples, so that migration is a choice rather than a necessity. Based on the experience of Catholic organizations in many countries, the flow of migrants will continue as long as social factors compel people to leave their homes in search of work or safety. We must both address the factors that create global poverty and marginalization, and work for comprehensive migration reform.

Comprehensive migration reform includes addressing the factors driving migration and reforming current U.S. migration policy that is outdated and ill-equipped to serve the needs of both immigrants and the nation. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic organizations nationwide have formed the *Catholic Campaign for Comprehensive Migration Reform* (www.justiceforimmigrants.org) that supports the following:

- 1) A path to citizenship for the 10-12 million undocumented people in the U.S.
- 2) Reform of our employment-based immigration system, so that migrant workers can enter the United States and work in a safe, regulated, and humane manner
- 3) Reform of the family-based immigration system, so that waiting times to reunite families are significantly reduced
- 4) Restoration of due process protections for immigrants
- 5) Policies to address the root causes of migration, such as economic development in poor countries.

² The Catholic Social Teaching principles referenced pertain to all migrants. For brevity, additional principles on refugees and asylum seekers were not included.

Questions and Answers Regarding the Position of the Catholic Church on Immigration

- ***What, in a nutshell, is the U.S. bishops' position on immigration reform? Does the Catechism of the Catholic Church have anything to say about this issue?***

The Catholic Church believes that the current U.S. immigration system is broken and needs to be reformed in all aspects, or, comprehensively. This would include a path to citizenship for the 11-12 million undocumented immigrants in the country; a temporary worker program to allow migrant workers to enter safely and humanely; and family-based immigration reform which allows families to be reunited more quickly. The Church also teaches that the root causes of migration — namely, global economic disparities — need to be addressed. The Church has taken a position on immigration because, besides being an economic, social, and legal issue, it is also a humanitarian one, and, ultimately has moral implications.

Each day church social service programs, hospitals, schools, and parishes see the human consequences of a broken system: families are divided, migrant workers are exploited and abused, and human beings die in the desert. This impacts human dignity and human life and should be addressed. While there is no mention of immigration specifically in the Catechism of the Church, migration is a major theme in the Gospels. Jesus and the Holy Family were refugees who fled the terror of Herod, and Jesus, the Son of Man, was an itinerant teacher while on Earth, with “no place to lay His head.” Jesus also taught us to “welcome the stranger,” — “what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me.”

- ***The House and Senate have each passed immigration reform bills. Has the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops taken a stand on either of these proposals?***

In December 2005, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 4437, the *Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*. Because of its enforcement-only approach and overly punitive provisions, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed the legislation. On May 24, the U.S. Senate passed the *Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act (CIRA) of 2006*, which contains many elements which the U.S. bishops support, although it also contains tough enforcement provisions. The U.S. bishops have called the bill the right approach and right direction for comprehensive immigration reform, but have not endorsed the bill in its entirety.

- ***Some charge that the Church is in favor of a nation without borders, that we support illegal immigration. How do you respond to that?***

The Church does not favor illegal immigration in any sense. It is not good for the migrant, who often suffers abuse by smugglers, exploitation in the workplace, and even death in the desert. It is not good for society or for local communities, because it creates a permanent underclass with no rights and no opportunity to assert them. That is why the Church supports the creation of legal avenues for migration and legal status for migrants. The Church has always supported the right of a sovereign nation to secure its borders, although it should be done in a manner that protects human life, to the greatest degree possible.

- ***Does the Church have the right to speak out on immigration reform, which is largely a political issue?***

All public policy issues — abortion, euthanasia, stem cell research, poverty reduction, and immigration reform — have political aspects to them. The Church is well within Her rights to speak out on public policy issues of moral consequence, and often does. In fact, the Church has a moral obligation to speak out on issues which impact human dignity and human life. In the case of immigration, the Church brings special expertise to the table because we are an immigrant church and we have helped assist immigrants to assimilate into our nation for years.

- ***In general, is immigration good for our country, or does it create new burdens on U.S. citizens?***

Except for Native Americans, we are all descendants of immigrants or are immigrants ourselves. Immigrants have helped build the great nation we enjoy today. While opponents of immigration will attempt to raise the fears of U.S. citizens that immigrants today take away jobs, change the culture, and eat up public resources, the truth of the matter is that today's immigrants are no different than previous generations. They come to work hard and to support their families, not to take public resources or commit crimes. This is borne out in the majority of research studies on the subject, which conclude that, overall, immigrants are contributors to our economy and helpful to our local communities. They also bring a spiritual energy and richness which enriches our worship and Church.

- ***What is a “guest worker” program? Won't such a program only encourage more illegal immigration?***

A “guest worker” program is a political term for a program which provides temporary visas for migrant workers to come and work in specific industries, such as agriculture, service, and construction. The U.S. Bishops have traditionally opposed such programs because in the past they have led to the exploitation of workers and the lowering of wages. The reality is that we now have an unofficial “guest worker” program in our nation known as the “undocumented.” They have no rights in the workplace, but work hard and have no laws to protect them. The U.S. Bishops support a program which protects the rights of both U.S. and foreign-born workers and allows them the opportunity to assert their rights in the workplace. By creating legal avenues for migration, we will reduce illegal immigration flows.

- ***Some say that letting in too many immigrants could hurt the wages of workers already in the country, because they are often a cheap source of labor. Is this known to be true?***

Immigrant workers generally do not compete with U.S. workers for unskilled jobs. Some studies show that immigrant workers may have an impact on the job status and wages of low-skilled American workers, such as high school dropouts. Overall, however, immigrant workers fill crucial jobs that many American will not do, in important industries such as agriculture. By enacting immigration reform, the wages of immigrant workers will increase because they will be better able to assert their rights in the workplace and because the pool of unauthorized workers will dwindle.

**Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Justice For Immigrants
Website: www.justiceforimmigrants.org**



we are one family under God

Myths about Immigration

MYTH: Immigrants Increase the Crime Rate

FACT: Recent research has shown that immigrant communities do not increase the crime rate and that newly arriving immigrants tend to commit fewer crimes than native born Americans. Ruben Rumbaut, a professor of sociology at Brandeis University, found that “even as the undocumented population has doubled to 12 million since 1994, the violent crime rate in the United States has declined 34.2 percent and the property crime rate has fallen 26.4 percent.” Cities where there are high levels of immigrants, such as New York, Chicago and Miami experienced declines in violent crime during this period. Other cities with numerous immigrants, such as El Paso and Laredo, are among the country’s safest cities to live in.

MYTH: Immigrants Don’t Pay Taxes

FACT: Undocumented immigrants pay taxes. Between 50-75% of undocumented immigrants pay federal, state and local taxes. They also contribute to Medicare and provide as much as 9 billion dollars a year to the Social Security Fund. Further still, undocumented workers pay sales taxes where applicable and property taxes directly if they own and indirectly if they rent.

MYTH: The Catholic Church Supports Illegal Immigration and ‘Open Borders.’

FACT: The Catholic Church does not support law breaking or open borders. “The Bishops of the United States recognize the validity of and need for effective border enforcement that protects Americans from criminal and terrorist elements, allows for orderly and legal immigration, and respects the sovereign rule of law of the United States.”

MYTH: *Immigrants are a Drain on the United States Economy*

FACT: The immigrant community in the United States is, in fact, a net benefit to the economy. A recent Congressional Budget Office Report states that “over the past two decades, most efforts to estimate the fiscal impact of immigration in the United States have concluded that, in aggregate and over the long term, tax revenues of all types generated by immigrants—both legal and unauthorized—exceed the cost of the services they use.” Research reported by both the CATO Institute and the President’s Council of Economic Advisors reveals that the average immigrant pays a net 80,000 dollars more in taxes than they collect in government services. For immigrants with college degrees the net fiscal return is \$198,000.

MYTH: *Undocumented Immigrants are a Burden on the Healthcare System*

FACT: The National Immigration Law Center reports that the typical immigrant spends less than half the dollar amount for medical services when compared with the typical U.S. citizen. For example, in Los Angeles County, “total medical spending on undocumented immigrants was \$887 million in 2000 – 6 percent of total costs, although undocumented immigrants comprise 12 percent of the region’s residents.” Further, federal law generally bars undocumented immigrants from using Medicaid benefits except in emergency situations. Even then, immigrants as a group are significantly less likely to use emergency room services than are American citizens.

Source:

www.justiceforimmigrants.org/documents/immigration-myths.pdf

Find the latest updates about Immigration Reform at the official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

www.justiceforimmigrants.org

Bulletin Quotes on Immigration

Since its founding, the United States has received immigrants from around the world who have found opportunity and safe haven in a new land. The labor, values, and beliefs of immigrants from throughout the world have transformed the United States from a loose group of colonies into one of the leading democracies in the world today.

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States
"Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, #17

The Church in America must be a vigilant advocate, defending against any unjust restriction the natural right of individual persons to move freely within their own nation and from one nation to another. Attention must be called to the rights of migrants and their families and to respect for their human dignity, even in cases of non-legal immigration.

John Paul II, *"Ecclesia in America," 1999, # 65*

Catholic teaching has a long and rich tradition in defending the right to migrate. Based on the life and teachings of Jesus, the Church's teaching has provided the basis for the development of basic principles regarding the right to migrate for those attempting to exercise their God-given human rights. Catholic teaching also states that the root causes of migration—poverty, injustice, religious intolerance, armed conflicts—must be addressed so that migrants can remain in their homeland and support their families.

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States
"Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, #28

In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty and persecution are rampant, the presumption is that persons must migrate in order to support and protect themselves and that nations who are able to receive them should do so whenever possible. It is through this lens that we assess the current migration reality between the United States and Mexico.

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States
"Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, #39

The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness.

John Paul II, *Message for World Migration Day, 2000, #6*

Our concern as pastors for the dignity and rights of migrants extends to pastoral responses as well as public policy issues. The Church in our two countries [United States and Mexico] is constantly challenged to see the face of Christ, crucified and risen, in the stranger. The whole Church is challenged to live the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-25), as they are converted to be witnesses of the Risen Lord after they welcome him as a stranger. Faith in the presence of Christ in the migrant leads to a conversion of mind and heart, which leads to a renewed spirit of communion and to the building of structures of solidarity to accompany the migrant.

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States
"Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, # 40

Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access to those things required for human decency—food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
"Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility," 2007, # 49

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States
"Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, # 38

The Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all—especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
"Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity," 2000

Suggested Prayers

Prayer for Migrant Families

Good and gracious God, we thank you for the gift of families.
We are grateful for all of the joy and love that they bring into our lives,
and we ask that you provide special protection for all families,
particularly those who face hardships as they move in search of a better life.
Show mercy to those who travel in danger,
and lead them to a place of safety and peace.
Comfort those who are alone and afraid because their families have been torn apart
by violence and injustice.
As we reflect upon the difficult journey that the Holy Family faced as refugees in Egypt,
help us to remember the suffering of all migrant families.
Through the intercession of Mary our Mother, and St. Joseph the Worker, her spouse,
we pray that all migrants may be reunited with their loved ones
and find the meaningful work they seek.
Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality for all who come in search of refuge.
Give us the courage to welcome every stranger as Christ in our midst.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever. Amen.

Br. Michael McGrath, Justice for Immigrants
www.justiceforimmigrants.org

A Prayer for Immigrant Justice

Blessed are You, Lord God, King of all creation.
Through Your goodness, we live in this land that You have so richly blessed.
Help us always to recognize that our Blessings come from You
and remind us to share them with others,
especially those who come to us today from other lands.
Help us to be generous, just, and welcoming,
as You have been, and are, generous to us.

Justice For Immigrants Website
www.justiceforimmigrants.org

Prayer service: *From Many, One Family of God*

Lord Jesus, when you multiplied the loaves and fishes,
you provided more than food for the body,
you offered us the gift of yourself,
the gift which satisfies every hunger and quenches every thirst!

Your disciples were filled with fear and doubt,
but you poured out your love and compassion on the migrant crowd,
welcoming them as brothers and sisters.

Lord Jesus, today you call us to welcome the members of God's family
who come to our land to escape oppression, poverty,
persecution, violence and war.

Like your disciples, we too are filled with fear and doubt and even suspicion.
We build barriers in our hearts and in our minds.

Lord Jesus, help us by your grace,

To banish fear from our hearts, that we may embrace each of your children
as our own brother and sister;

To welcome migrants and refugees with joy and generosity,
while responding to their many needs;

To realize that you call all people to your holy mountain
to learn the ways of peace and justice;

To share of our abundance as you spread a banquet before us;

To give witness to your love for all people,
as we celebrate the many gifts they bring.

We praise you and give you thanks for the family you have called together from so many people. We see in this human family a reflection of the divine unity of the one Most Holy Trinity in whom we make our prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen

Marcia Timmel, OSF, Justice For Immigrants

www.justiceforimmigrants.org

Recommendations for Reading and Viewing

USCCB Publishing

Visit <http://www.usccbpublishing.org> to view their list of Immigration Resources, including:

- *Welcoming Christ In the Migrant* (revised)
- *Strangers No Longer* (56 pp booklet; DVD; brochure)
- *Together On The Journey: The Migrant's Way of the Cross*
- *Welcoming The Stranger Parish Guide* (36 pp booklet)
- *Welcoming The Stranger Among Us* (80 pp booklet & prayer card)
- *Who Are My Brothers and Sisters?* (64 pp booklet)
- *Guidelines For Receiving Pastoral Ministers In the United States* (40 pp booklet)
- *Justice For Immigrants Parish Resource Kit*

Other Websites:

- Justice For Immigrants Website: www.justiceforimmigrants.org
- Education For Justice Website: www.educationforjustice.org (membership fee)

Orbis Books

www.orbisbooks.com

Myers, Ched and Michael Colwell. *Our God Is Undocumented: Biblical Faith And Immigrant Justice*. Orbis Books: Maryknoll, NY. (ISBN: 978-1-57075-956-7)

Movies

Under The Same Moon: This drama tells the story of a young boy's journey across the U.S./Mexico border to be united with his mother. (Study Guide Available from OCSJM)

The Visitor: A lonesome widower and college professor find his mundane life shaken when he encounters undocumented immigrants who are threatened with deportation by US Immigration. (Study Guide Available from OCSJM)

Frozen River: Two single mothers smuggle undocumented immigrants over the Canadian/U.S. border at Christmas-time in order to make ends meet.

DVD's

Farmingville: The shocking attempted murders of two Mexican day laborers catapult a small Long Island town into the national headlines.

The Invisible Chapel: For over 20 years a small migrant chapel remained invisible to wealthy residents of a San Diego, CA neighborhood. (Study Guide Available from OCSJM)

Dying To Live: Directed by Holy Cross Father Daniel Groody, this film looks at the human faces of migrants and explores why they leave their homes.

Line in the Sand: This film uses the power of theater to tell stories of those affected by border crossings. Produced by Catholic Relief Services.