

May 10, 2007

Dear Friends in Christ:

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have become increasingly concerned about the plight of immigrants in our country. This concern has grown so much that we have decided to pursue a course of action that will lead, we hope, to immigration reform. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) believes that the conditions may be optimal in 2007 to achieve some level of immigration reform.

This issue engenders a lot of passion among the citizens of the United States. There are no simple solutions to this issue, but it is clear to the U. S. Bishops that our present system is not working and we must work together to find a way to reform it so that we may respond realistically to the labor demands of our nation, support the right of people to immigrate, and protect the human dignity of every person. We also need to do this in a way that doesn't condone unlawful entry or circumvent our laws.

Much work needs to be done to lay the groundwork for such a reform. Among our priorities is education about the facts and myths surrounding immigrants and reform. Most importantly, we must be aware of the biblical and theological tradition of our Church regarding immigrants.

Beginning this weekend, each parish in the diocese is being asked to participate in a three-week series of bulletin inserts produced by the USCCB. These inserts will provide you with basic information that will help you understand the importance of this issue in our nation. You may also find additional information from the USCCB by going to www.justiceforimmigrants.org. Additional study materials are also available from our diocesan Office of Peace and Justice.

Our diocese is blessed with a significant immigrant population. Many of them are Catholic. While we find ourselves at times struggling to absorb these newcomers into our parishes, we also know that they have enriched our parishes and the Catholic faith in this diocese in many ways. As brothers and sisters in faith, we have a special bond with them and need to do all we can to help them make their way in our parishes and society.

I am grateful to you for all you will do to learn about immigration reform in our country and diocese. May Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, migrants in a foreign land, guide you and the U. S. Bishops in our efforts to welcome those who come to our country seeking shelter, safety and an opportunity to live a meaningful life.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Raleigh

