

The Catholic Campaign for Justice for Immigrant Reform
Catechesis for the Catholic Diocese of Raleigh – Adult Groups & Youth Ministry
Part I of a Four Part Series

In the Church no one is a stranger, and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere. As a sacrament of unity and thus a sign and a binding force for the whole human race, the Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognized and accepted as brothers and sisters. It is the task of the various Dioceses actively to ensure that these people who are obliged to live outside the safety net of civil society, may find a sense of brotherhood in the Christian community.

1995 World Migration Day, Pope John Paul II

Scripture

Exodus 23:9 You must not oppress the stranger; you know how a stranger feels, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt.

Psalms 82:2-4 No more mockery of justice, No more favoring the wicked! Let the weak and the orphan have justice, be fair to the wretched and destitute; rescue the weak and needy; save them from the clutches of the wicked.

Isaiah 10: 1-2 Woe to the legislators of infamous laws, to those who issue tyrannical decrees, who refuse justice to the unfortunate and cheat the poor among my people of their rights, who make widows of their prey and rob the orphan.

Mark 12:30-31 This is the first [commandment]...you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all you mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

Ephesians 4:1-6 I, therefore the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, ..one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Philippians 2:5-8 In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God, but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross.

Church Documents

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.

Strangers No Longer, Catholic Bishops of Mexico and U.S, 2003

Our common faith in Jesus Christ moves us to search for ways that favor a spirit of solidarity. It is a faith that transcends borders and bids us to overcome all forms of discrimination and violence so that we may build relationships that are just and loving.

Strangers No Longer, Catholic Bishops of Mexico and U.S, 2003

The presence of so many people of so many different cultures and religions in so many different parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity. The presence of brothers and sisters from different cultures should be celebrated as a gift to the Church.

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us, USCCB, 2000

As Catholics we are called to take concrete measures to overcome the misunderstanding, ignorance, competition, and fear that stand in the way of genuinely welcoming the stranger in our midst and enjoying the communion that is our destiny as Children of God.

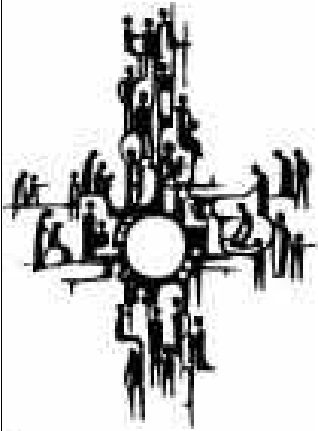
Welcoming the Stranger Among Us, USCCB, 2000

The remuneration of work is not something that can be left to the laws of the marketplace; nor should it be a decision left to the will of the more powerful. It must be determined in accordance with justice and equity; which means that workers must be paid a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill their family obligations in a worthy manner.

Mater et Magistra, Pope John XXIII, 1961

For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.

Justice in the World, Synod of Bishops, 1971



Preparation

Copy of world map on page 4, enlarge and mount on posterboard.
Pins with colored tips

Copies of page 1 and 3 for participants

Newsprint and Marker

For in-depth learning and preparation, visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org –
The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

Opening Prayer (handout page 3)

Program Introduction and Outline:

Explain: Immigration Reform is an issue for the Church and us as Catholics, because it affects the lives of each one of us; as brothers and sisters in Christ, as citizens of the United States, as being good neighbor to those around us, we need to be well informed and active in working for the common good of all. Through this series, we hope to gain insight into the issue, understand it through the lens of Catholic social teaching and our faith, and learn more about ourselves, our community and our world.

Have each person place a pin in the world map showing their family's place of origin.

Invite each to tell a story of their family's migration (for large groups, break into small groups for sharing).

Today is the third large wave of immigrants to come to the United States.

Does anyone have stories of these new neighbors they want to share?

Discussion using newsprint for responses (one for commonalities– one for differences):

What do these newcomers have in common with us and with our ancestors' journeys to America?

What are some of the differences?

Read *Immigration: Some Basics* on page 3, alternating readers.

Discuss: What point is new to your understanding of the issue? Going back to our list of commonalities and differences, would you add or change anything to the list? Would you add other items to this basics list?

Next session we will hear on this issue through the lens of faith and Catholic social teaching. Please read page 1 of this session at home and reflect on what we have read, and heard, and shared.

Let us notice the newcomers in our communities, at home, at the market, at school, at Church, and pray the prayer we began this session with.

Closing Prayer: Group intercessions and Our Father...

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Four Part Series on Immigrants

Brothers/Sisters All

Catholic Social Teaching

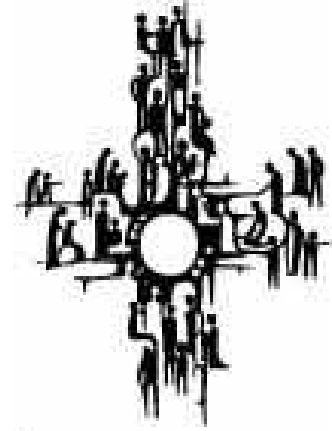
Issues for Immigrants

Our Response



Opening Prayer

Blessed are the wanderers and those adrift.
Blessed are the strangers at our door.
Blessed are the unfed, the homeless on the road.
Blessed is the child crying in pain.
Blessed is the mother working to provide for her children left behind
in her native country.
Blessed are those who welcome Christ to be born again
when they welcome these ones.
Blessed are we who struggle to make a place in our hearts
for all of our brothers and sisters.
Amen.



Immigration: Some Basics

The Migrant Struggle

- There are 11 million undocumented persons living in the U.S. – the number continues to grow.
- Every day, one migrant perishes along the U.S.-Mexican border.
- It typically requires 5 years for a lawful permanent resident to become eligible for citizenship; applicants face further delays which can last nearly a year.
- A lawful permanent resident can sponsor family members to come to the U.S., but must show that they can maintain each family member at 125% of the poverty level. This is one of the many hurdles that prevent families from reuniting lawfully.
- One million applications are pending for a family member to become a lawful permanent resident of the U.S.
- The number of permanent immigration visas is arbitrarily set for each country. Current legal limits on both temporary and permanent immigration remain largely unresponsive to changes in labor demand from U.S. employers.

Workforce Issues

- 15% of the U.S. workforce is made up of immigrants; 5% of the workforce is undocumented.
- Labor laws fail to protect large categories of immigrants – 3 million are agricultural laborers, 1 million are domestic employees and 7 million are independent contractors.
- In 2002, more than 1/2 of the children of immigrants and 1/3 of the children in native-born households lived in families that earned less than 200 percent of the poverty line.
- More than 45% of immigrants lack health insurance. Immigrants in many industries suffer work-related injuries at high rates, including pesticide poisoning, construction accidents and repetitive stress injuries. Mexican nationals are 80% more likely to die on the job than native workers.
- Studies show that immigrant workers supplement, rather than displace, native workers, and by and large do not compete for the same jobs. During the 1990s, 11 job categories would have experienced a worker shortage without the presence of immigrant workers.
- Today, our immigration system is ill-equipped to handle the current demand for immigrant labor in the U.S. According to the 2005 *Economic Report of the President*, “one of the most pervasive features of undocumented immigration is that it is overwhelmingly driven by supply and demand; immigrants need work and want to work in the U.S. and American employers want to hire them.”
- There were approximately 69,300 foreign born people serving in the U.S. armed forces as of December, 2004.
Center of Concern, Washington, D.C.

“The Church does not condone or encourage illegal immigration because it is not good for society or for the migrant, who lives outside the law and in the shadows. What we are trying to do is change our laws to reflect the reality of migration in the world today and to ensure that basic human rights and dignity are respected. Yes, those in the U.S. without legal status have broken the law, but they do so in order to survive and to support their families. At the same time they contribute to our economy through their hard work and work in important industries. So we must consider if the law is a just one and whether it is in the best interest of the nation to change the law.”

USCCB Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform www.justiceforimmigrants.org

