

BULLETIN QUOTES ON IMMIGRATION

Historical Grounding

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.

– U.S. Catholic Bishops, "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

The Catholic Vision

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.

– U.S. Catholic Bishops, "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.

– U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, #39

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 (Lk 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.

– U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope," 2003, # 40

Two important dimensions of contemporary migrations are not adequately discussed and paid attention to in the formulation of policies: the victims of migration flows and the priority that persons have over the economy. The whole system of protection and of human rights is relegated to a secondary supporting role instead of serving as it was intended, as an assurance that the dignity of all human persons must take precedence.

– Holy See on Migrant Workers, "A Comprehensive Perspective Is Needed," 12/7/2007, #4

Ethical Dimension

The ethical dimension in the discussion of migration results from a larger anthropological framework in which secular and religious people can find a common ground in order to address the inevitable tension between different principles. In the case of migrants, this tension appears in the moral obligations of governments to ensure the safety and well-being of their own populations and a more universal ethic that values the well-being of all mankind and of each person.

– *Holy See on Migrant Workers, "A Comprehensive Perspective Is Needed," 12/7/2007, #5*

Human Dignity and Human Rights

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.

– *U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility," 2007, # 49*

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*

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.

– *U.S. Catholic Bishops, "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.

– *U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity," 2000*

Immigration: A Way Forward

An inclusive approach that takes into account all components of the migrants' journey: the decisions to emigrate and of how many immigrants to admit; the modalities of participation of various types of migrants in the host society; the role played by migrants in the economic development and in society; the migrants' entitlement to protection and the exercise of their rights, seems the appropriate way to proceed.

– *Holy See on Migrant Workers, "A Comprehensive Perspective Is Needed," 12/7/2007, #5*

Present political trends appear clear and slanted in the direction of responding to the more emotional and vocal demands of public opinion for control and integration. In the long run, however, a fair and effective solution will come from a comprehensive approach that embraces all policy components: the rights of the state and of the receiving community, of the migrants, and of the international common good.

– *Holy See on Migrant Workers, "A Comprehensive Perspective Is Needed," 12/7/2007, #5*