

ISSUES AND ACTIONS

September 2010



The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy, and a culture of



THE CHALLENGE OF IMMIGRATION REFORM

“There are not more than 100 people in the world who truly hate the Catholic Church, but there are millions who hate what they perceive to be the Catholic Church.”

Bishop Fulton Sheen

In the face of the U.S. Conference of Bishops’ initiative calling for a “humane and comprehensive solution to the problems which beset our immigration system” the observation by Bishop Sheen can be applied not only to those outside the Church, but to millions of baptized Catholics as well. This fact can easily be verified by referring to numbers of remarks following postings of the Bishops’ statements.



Sojourners magazine also quotes other Christian ministers who have found that mention of the biblical principles underlying immigration reform issues elicit negative response from their congregations, and involves a “calculated risk” that can be felt in their collection baskets.

In spite of this resistance, Cardinal Roger Mahoney identifies five areas on which most Americans can find commonality regarding immigration reform:

- ♦ the need for home countries of immigrants to take greater responsibility for the plight of their citizens;
- ♦ increased border security;
- ♦ making more visas available for unskilled workers;
- ♦ the importance of filling agricultural jobs;
- ♦ the implementation of the Dream Act, which would allow children of undocumented immigrants brought to the United States at an early age to become legal residents.

Many who oppose the concept of immigration reform believe it would involve total amnesty for those who are here without permission; they would, however, be required to pay for their transgression, 'get right' with the law, and then earn their way toward eventual citizenship.

As to the concern of some that undocumented immigrants are taking jobs from American citizens, the United Farm Workers has a response: Come take them back. The UFW has a Web site called *takeourjobs.com*. The site issues this challenge: "Farm workers are ready to welcome citizens and legal residents who wish to replace them in the field. We will use our knowledge and staff to help connect the unemployed with farm employers." UFW president, Arturo Rodriguez has stated that only three American citizens have been placed in the fields as a result of this appeal.



Catholic Social Teaching outlines two essential duties related to the realm of immigration, both of which must be carried out, and neither of which can be ignored. The first duty is to welcome the foreigner out of charity and respect for the dignity and rights of the human person. Persons have the right to immigrate and thus government must accommodate this right to the greatest extent possible, consistent with its other obligations to the common good.



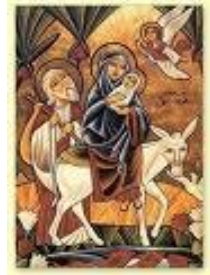
In a statement issued at a private audience with members of the Pontifical Council for Migrants, Pope Benedict XVI made clear that a proper approach to immigration should balance "the rights and duties of foreigners and those of the host communities." It is of importance, he said, to reconcile "recognition for the rights of the individual with the principle of national sovereignty, making specific reference to the needs of security, public order, and the control of frontiers." Laws should favor "the legitimate right to family reunion, asylum and refuge, compensating any necessary restrictive measures, and contrasting the deplorable traffic in human beings."

Although it seems that there is little hope for the passage of comprehensive immigration reform at present, there is a chance that the Dream Act may be passed soon. The bill would legalize immigrant high school graduates of good moral character who were brought to the United States at a young age without legal status. The terms are: those who complete two years of college education or military service will be eligible for their green card. A concerted effort to promote passage of the Dream Act within the next few days is underway. To support this, log on to the CCIR site and sign a petition to your senators through the link provided.



We can also join in prayer for migrants and immigrants.

Mary most Holy, you, together with Saint Joseph and the Child Jesus, experienced the suffering of exile. You were forced to flee to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod. Today we entrust the men, women and children who live as migrants and refugees to your maternal protection.



Teach us to recognize your Son
...in the migrant who labors to bring food to our tables
...in the refugee seeking protection from persecution, war and famine
...in the woman and child who are victims of human trafficking
...in the asylum seeker imprisoned for fleeing without documents.

May all those who are far from their place of birth find in the Church a home where no one is a stranger. We ask this in the name of your blessed Son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

The following sites provide a wealth of ongoing information regarding immigration issues:

migrationinformation.org

nccbuscc.org

justiceforimmigrants.org

networklobby.org

northcoastnow.com

thehill.com

ccir.net

Prepared by the Peace and Justice Committee