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**2012 National Migration Week
January 8, 2012 (Epiphany of the Lord)**

“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.” (Isaiah 60: 1)

These words of hope from the Prophet Isaiah speak to a people who have long faced struggles and who seek hope in darkness. We, the Catholic Bishops of Illinois, on the cusp of a New Year, seek to offer that same voice of hope to another people in struggle: immigrant families. The fact that there are 11 million men, women and children in our nation who live in the shadows and are fearful of family separation by deportation is proof that our current system is flawed and our immigration policies have failed us. Let us pray that in this New Year we may recognize the need for comprehensive immigration reform that respects the rule of law, yet also ensures that the law is applied fairly and compassionately to those immigrant families among us who need our help.

How appropriate it is that we celebrate National Migration Week (January 8-14) beginning with the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Like the journey of the Magi following the star to the Source of hope, love and freedom found in the Holy Child lying in the Bethlehem manger, many families are also on a journey seeking hope in a new country. They seek a place of economic, emotional, physical and spiritual security, longing for those things needed to live in human dignity: productive work and fair wages, food, shelter, education, health care, and protection from harm, all too often out of reach in their native land. Yet, under the current immigration system in our country, we see the tragic separation of many of these families. Their hopes turn to despair. But it need not remain this way; we should seek to accompany these families on their journey and support them in their hopes. We should do this because their hopes for themselves and their families are also ours.

Over the months to come, each Catholic diocese in Illinois will be sharing stories of immigrant families who are members of our parishes and communities. They will share their experiences of past and current struggles as well as their successes and hopes for the future. These stories will be shared in diocesan publications, in parish bulletins and on the Catholic Conference of Illinois’ website (www.catholicconferenceofillinois.org), as well as other sources. Please take the time to read their stories and learn about the immigration issues that significantly affect your neighbors and fellow parishioners.

We call on all Catholics and people of faith in Illinois to pray for these families and to become those epiphanies: previously hidden manifestations of the Christ within, now revealing to others the deep compassion of Christ through our individual and collective efforts to provide hope and support to immigrant families and to advocate for comprehensive reform of our nation’s immigration laws.

The Catholic Bishops of Illinois

His Eminence Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archdiocese of Chicago

Most Reverend Thomas G. Doran
Diocese of Rockford

Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
Diocese of Peoria

Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Diocese of Belleville

Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Diocese of Springfield

Most Reverend R. Daniel Conlon
Diocese of Joliet