

# Called by Faith to Welcome Immigrants

*“The presence of brothers and sisters from different cultures should be celebrated as a gift to the Church.”*

*- Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the US Catholic Bishops*

Our Catholic faith calls each one of us to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality and justice to migrants and refugees, regardless of status. Immigration is also a core-issue for the Judeo-Christian tradition, with God’s concern for the migrant demonstrated in the book of Exodus. As members of the Catholic faith, we participate in Christ’s mission of love, community and friendship to the stranger. The Catholic Bishops have identified principles that should act as a guide for policy makers in creating immigration reform legislation.



## The U.S. Catholic Bishops’ 2003 Pastoral Letter on Immigration endorses five principles:

- Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland. All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.
- Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.
- Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders. The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. Economically more powerful nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.
- Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection. The global community should protect those who flee wars and persecution. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.
- The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected. 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 by enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.



The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform



## Prayer for Immigrants and Refugees

*God of the journey, God of the traveler, We pray for those who leave their homes in search of new beginnings and possibilities, may they know your presence with them. We pray that those who seek to make a home in this country may find us welcoming and willing to help them find a path toward citizenship. We pray that our legislators, as they craft new immigration legislation, may find the wisdom and courage to enact new policies that do justice for our country and for those who would immigrate here. We pray for those who fan the flames of fear and discrimination against the undocumented, that they may be touched with your divine compassion. We pray in Jesus' name Amen.*

(Adapted from *People Migrate 2006*)

### Suggested Resources:

The **Missionary Oblates JPIC Office** website is regularly updated with the latest information and action alerts on comprehensive immigration reform.

Visit: [www.omiusajpic.org](http://www.omiusajpic.org)

The **Border Working Group** promotes justice at the US/Mexico border by calling for policy changes in favor of an approach emphasizing human rights and accountability, while addressing the root causes of our countries' shared challenges.

Visit: [www.lawg.org](http://www.lawg.org)

**Interfaith Immigration Coalition** is a partnership of faith-based organizations committed to enacting fair and humane immigration reform that reflects our mandate to welcome the stranger and treat all human beings with dignity and respect.

Visit: [www.interfaithimmigration.org](http://www.interfaithimmigration.org)

**Justice for Immigrants**, the advocacy campaign of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, aims to educate the public about Church teaching on migration and immigrants.

Visit: [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org)



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