

MISSIONARY OBLATES JPIC



Solidarity With Immigrants & Refugees

“Servants! Farmhands! Peasants! Poor! Come and learn who you are in the eyes of God. You poor of Jesus Christ, you afflicted, unfortunate suffering, infirm, diseased: all you who are burdened with misery, listen to me! You are the children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, co-heirs of His eternal kingdom, His cherished inheritance. Lift up your minds: you are the children of God. Look through the tatters that cover you.” (*Saint Eugene De Mazenod OMI*)



Becoming a Church Together

Guided by Catholic Social Teaching and a commitment to Oblate values, the Missionary Oblates JPIC office continues to advocate for a more fair immigration system that is welcoming to immigrants and refugees. Following this year's U.S. Province convocation theme, *“Rooted in Christ Crucified, Growing in Witness to His Kingdom,”* Missionary Oblates and lay partners are confronted with the challenges of a broken immigration system that tears families and communities apart.

Everyday immigrant families are negatively impacted by our broken immigration system. Given the choice, most migrants would prefer to stay in their countries of origin. It is a desperate act to migrate without legal documents. But violence, gangs and a lack of economic opportunities force them to seek better lives across borders. As people of faith, we are concerned when families are separated due to deportations and when immigrant workers are mistreated.

Enforcement-only immigration laws such as militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and deportations drive migrants deeper into isolation. These deterrence strategies have failed to address the flow of migrants; rather they cost taxpayers billions and divert resources away from building safer communities.

In June 2013, Pope Francis celebrated mass on the Italian island of Lampedusa, to commemorate thousands of migrants who have died crossing the sea from North Africa. He spoke out against the *“globalization of indifference” that leads to tragedies like the deaths of so many migrants seeking a better life.* As Catholics our faith informs us that human beings share in God's creation through work and calls on us to defend the sanctity of family. This is why the Church shows strong concern and support for all migrants. Immigration is a pro-family and pro-life issue.

Our faith calls on us to welcome the stranger and offer hospitality to migrants. Hospitality and justice to the migrants is a key theme in the Bible. In Matthew 25, *“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”* The stranger's vulnerability is a reminder of people's dependence on the kindness of God. God instructs us to act towards the stranger as he acts towards us.

Connect with Missionary Oblates JPIC

The U.S. Missionary Oblates has a long history of serving immigrant communities. We appreciate the rich contributions immigrants and refugees make as members of the church community and society as a whole.

Through education, Oblate animation, and advocacy, JPIC works to ensure that U.S. immigration policy is enacted out of compassion, respect for human rights and awareness of the vital role of immigrants in society.

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"On this continent, too, thousands of persons are led to travel north in search of a better life for themselves and for their loved ones, in search of greater opportunities. Is this not what we want for our own children? We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories; trying to respond as best we can to their situation. To respond in a way which is always humane, just and fraternal." (Pope Francis' remarks to U.S. Congress, September 2015)

**Strangers No Longer Together On The Journey Of Hope
(U.S Catholic Bishops - 2003)**

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.

What You Can Do: Our Faith in Action

Pray for the protection of immigrants and refugees. Pray for elected leaders to have the moral courage and wisdom to pass humane immigration reform. Host a mass to kick off immigration events, engage parishioners in reflection and prayer.

Learn about Catholic Social Teaching's position on immigration and become more familiar with U.S immigration policies.

Educate people in your community and parish about our current immigration system, and Church teachings on the issue.

Advocate for comprehensive immigration reform. Ask your Members of Congress to support immigration policies that value the dignity of all persons, unite families and protect vulnerable immigrants and refugees.

Don't call me a stranger

Don't call me a stranger;
The soil we step on is the same;
But mine is not "the promised land"

Don't call me a stranger;
The color of my passport is different;
But the color of our blood is the same;

Don't call me a stranger;
The language I speak sounds different,
But the feelings it expresses are the same.

Don't call me a stranger;
I toil and struggle in your land;
And the sweat of our brows is the same.

Don't call me a stranger;
Borders, we created them;
And the separation that results is the same.

Don't call me a stranger;
I am just your friend;
But you do not know me yet.

Don't call me a stranger;
We cry for justice and peace in different ways
But our God is the same.

Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus, 1995
(Abridged version)