



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE + ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON + DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

IMMIGRATION RESOURCES FOR PRIESTS

The Basics of Church Teaching on Migration

- **All persons have the right to have their basic human needs met.**
 - They have the right to have their needs met and to live in peace and dignity in their homelands – i.e. they have the right *not* to emigrate.¹
 - If their basic needs cannot be met in their homelands, persons have the right to seek them abroad – i.e. they have the right *to* emigrate.² The right to emigrate necessarily implies the right to immigrate.³
 - The right to migrate is an extension of economic initiative (the right to provide for one's family).
 - The right to migrate is not absolute (rights that are absolute include the right to life and the right to freely practice religion) and can be mitigated in favor of the common good.⁴
- **Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.**
 - Nations may regulate borders to provide for national security, tranquility and prosperity.
 - The right to regulate borders is not absolute and regulations must promote the common good. The common good includes concern not only for members of a particular society, but also for the universal human family.⁵
- **Families have the right to remain united and the right to live with one's family cannot be denied by law.⁶**

The Pontiffs on Migrants and Migration

- “You know indeed how preoccupied we have been and with what anxiety we have followed those who have been forced by revolutions in their own countries, or by unemployment or hunger to leave their homes and live in foreign lands. The natural law itself, no less than devotion to humanity, urges that ways of migration be opened to these people. For the Creator of the universe made all good things primarily for the good of all.”⁷
- “Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own state. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and to take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular state does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor of citizenship in that universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men.”⁸
- “The Church considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God (cf. Jn 11:52), to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant, in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership, but on the common desire to accept God's word and to seek justice.”⁹
- “In this misfortune experienced by the Family of Nazareth, obliged to take refuge in Egypt, we can catch a glimpse of the painful condition in which all migrants live, especially, refugees, exiles, evacuees, internally displaced persons, those who are persecuted... The Family of Nazareth reflects the image of God safeguarded in the heart of every human family, even if disfigured and weakened by emigration.”¹⁰

Scripture References to Migrants and Migration

Genesis 12:1	Exodus 23: 9	Job 31:32	Matthew 3:13-15
Genesis 15:13	Leviticus 19:33-34	Jeremiah 22:3	Matthew 25:31-46
Genesis 46:(5-6)	Deuteronomy 10:17-19	Ezekiel 47:21-23	Ephesians 2:19-20
Exodus 3:16-17	Deuteronomy 27:19	Malachi 3:5	1 Peter 1:1-2
Exodus 20:10			

The Church's Public Policy Positions on Immigration *Note: The focus of the Conference project is not public policy. Rather, the information below is intended to be helpful should you have inquiries from parishioners.*

- **General Principles**
 - The dignity of the human person must be respected and priority must be given to family (re)unification.
 - All people should have their basic needs met in their homelands, but have the right to seek basic needs abroad if they cannot be met at home. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, but are urged to respond with generosity if they can accommodate extra immigrants.¹¹
 - The method of a person's entry into the U.S. is a separate issue from our response to him now that he's here.
 - While an *action* or immigration *status* can be illegal, a *person* can never be "illegal."
- **Federal Level**
 - International policy should support conditions that allow people to remain in their homelands.
 - Illegal entry and circumvention of immigration laws is not condoned, but the large number of undocumented immigrants is evidence the current system is broken and comprehensive reform is needed.
 - Earned legalization proposals should provide a window of opportunity for undocumented immigrants to pay a fine and application fee, have criminal background checks and security screenings, demonstrate they have paid taxes and are learning English, and obtain a visa that could lead to permanent residency, over time.
- **State and Local Levels**
 - Immigration policies are the jurisdiction of the federal government. State and local governments should not enact policies that give them authority to enforce federal immigration law.
 - State and local governments are encouraged to promote policies that help all immigrants provide for their families and become participating members of their local communities.
- **Prudential Judgment**
 - The general principles may be met by any number of specific policies. Individuals may reach different prudential judgments on specific policies, provided the policies they do support meet the general principles.

For More Information

- www.justiceforimmigrants.org – Justice for Immigrants, an effort of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
 - Homily notes, prayers of the faithful, parish resources - http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/parish_kit.html
- www.usccb.org/mrs/ - U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services
 - Expanded Scripture and papal document selections, under the "Church Teaching and Documents" bar at left
 - More detailed public policy positions and news on federal immigration legislation
- **Papal and Episcopal Documents on Migration**
 - Papal Messages for World Migration Day - available at the USCCB site above or at www.vatican.va
 - Pope Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*, 1952.
 - Pope John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, 1963.
 - *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, Bishops of the United States and Mexico, 2003.
- www.mdccathcon.org – Links to all resources above and more

¹ Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, no. 25 and Pope John Paul II, *Migration With a View to Peace*, Message for World Migration Day, 2004, no. 3

² *Pacem in Terris*, no. 106 and *Migration With a View to Peace*, no. 3.

³ Pope John Paul II, *Undocumented Migrants*, Message for World Migration Day, 1996, no. 3 and *Pacem in Terris*, no. 106.

⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2241

⁵ *Ibid.*, nos. 1910-1911.

⁶ *Undocumented Migrants*, no. 4.

⁷ Pope Pius XII, Letter to the Bishops of the United States, December 24, 1948, in *Exsul Familia*

⁸ *Pacem in Terris*, 1963, no. 25.

⁹ *Undocumented Migrants*, no. 3.

¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, *The Migrant Family*, Message for World Migration Day, 2007.

¹¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2241.