



Blessed Trinity Catholic Community + Spirit of Christ Mission

## CATHOLIC TEACHINGS ON THE RIGHTS OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

- The presence of so many people of so many different cultures and religions in so many different parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The new immigrants call most of us back to our ancestral heritage as descendants of immigrants and to our baptismal heritage as members of the body of Christ. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- 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 U.S. Catholic Bishops*

- Immigrants, new to our shores, call us out of our unawareness to a conversion of mind and heart through which we are able to offer a genuine and suitable welcome, to share together as brothers and sisters at the same table, and to work side by side to improve the quality of life for society's marginalized members. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Through the members of the Church, solitary migrations are to end in the embrace of solidarity. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The Catholic community is rapidly re-encountering itself as an "immigrant Church," a witness at once to the diversity of people who make up our world and to our unity in one humanity, destined to enjoy the fullness of God's blessing in Jesus Christ. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- We call upon all people of good will, but Catholics especially, to welcome the newcomers in their neighborhoods and schools, in their places of work and worship, with heartfelt hospitality, openness, and eagerness both to help and to learn from our brothers and sisters of whatever religion, ethnicity, or background. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Racist attitudes can linger in subtle ways, even when people get to know one another in parish activities, unless we vigorously educate ourselves about our neighbors, learn to appreciate their heritages, encounter their own images of us, and strive to work with them on behalf of common causes. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Indeed, no culture is either permanent or perfect. All constantly need to be evangelized and uplifted by the good news of Jesus Christ. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The Church of the twenty-first century requires a profound conversion in spirit and in its institutions to reflect its own cultural pluralism, to address the needs of the whole Catholic community, and to further a genuine communion of solidarity among the diverse members of the Body of Christ. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- As Catholics we are called to take concrete measures to overcome the misunderstanding, ignorance, competition, and fear that stand in the way of genuinely welcoming the stranger in our midst and enjoying the communion that is our destiny as Children of God. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Communion does not abolish differences but brings together one family, diverse and united in the one Lord. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Whenever the diverse cultures of a parish and diocese are able to share the Eucharist in special celebrations that reflect the cultural riches of the participants, the Church demonstrates in the sacrament of our unity the multicultural face of the Church. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Priests, seminarians, religious, and lay ministers should all be encouraged to learn a language and acquire cultural knowledge relevant to their ministry. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Immigrants will experience the Church's welcome most personally at the level of the parish. Pastors and parish staff, accordingly, must be filled with a spirit of welcome, responding to a new and perhaps little-understood culture. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*

- Catholic schools can provide the children of immigrants with opportunities to adapt to American culture in a context permeated by the faith and in an atmosphere of hospitality to all cultures, and they can do much to promote cultural understanding and respect among parents and students alike. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The call to solidarity is also a call to promote the effective recognition of the rights of immigrants and to overcome all discrimination based on race, culture, or religion. . . . Catholic lay people, diocesan officials, and bishops should continue to work together with community organizations, labor unions, and other religious bodies on behalf of the rights of immigrants in the workplace, schools, public services, our legal system, and all levels of government. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Immigrant communities give ample witness to what it is to be Church in their desire to worship as a people, in their faith, in their solidarity with one another and with the weakest among them, in their devotion and their faithfulness to the Church of their ancestors. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- The Church of the twenty-first century will be, as it has always been, a Church of many cultures, languages and traditions, yet simultaneously one, as God is one Father, Son, and Holy Spirit unity in diversity. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*
- Diversity of ethnicity, education, and social class challenges us as pastors to welcome these new immigrants and help them join our communities in ways that are respectful of their cultures and in ways that mutually enrich the immigrants and the receiving Church. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*

## Quotes from Other Documents of Catholic Social Teaching on Welcoming the Stranger Among Us and Building Unity in Our Diversity

- We shall always insist upon giving a generous welcome to others which is at once a duty of human solidarity and Christian charity. . . . [They should be] welcomed with brotherly love, [with] examples of upright living in which genuine and effective Christian charity and the highest spiritual values are esteemed. Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio: On the Development of Peoples* (March 26, 1967), no. 67
- In the Old Testament, the Torah teaches that strangers and the homeless in general, inasmuch as they are exposed to all sorts of dangers, deserve special concern from the believer. Indeed, God clearly and repeatedly recommends hospitality and generosity toward the stranger . . . , reminding Israel of how precarious its own existence had once been. John Paul II, *Developing Special Concern for the Homeless, Origins* 26:30 (January 16, 1997): p. 495
- In order to build the civilization of love, dialogue between cultures must work to overcome all ethnocentric selfishness and make it possible to combine regard for one's own identity with understanding of others and respect for diversity. John Paul II, *World Day for Peace Message*, January 1, 2001
- Dialogue leads to a recognition of diversity and opens the mind to the mutual acceptance and genuine collaboration demanded by the human family's basic vocation to unity. John Paul II, *World Day for Peace Message*, January 1, 2001
- This atmosphere of welcoming is increasingly necessary in confronting today's diverse forms of distancing ourselves from others. This is profoundly evidenced in the problem of millions of refugees and exiles, in the phenomenon of racial intolerance as well as intolerance toward the person whose only "fault" is a search for work and better living conditions outside his own country, and in the fear of all who are different and thus seen as a threat. John Paul II, *Welcoming the Poor: Reigniting Hope, Origins* 27:36 (February 26, 1998): p. 605
- Our common dignity as human beings calls us to respect the alien among us, regardless of their status or social position. A preferential love for the poor and disenfranchised is a sure sign of one's Christian identity. Most Rev. Robert N. Lynch, Bishop of St. Petersburg, Fla.



A person's dignity does not depend on them being a citizen, a migrant, or a refugee. Saving the life of someone fleeing war and poverty is an act of humanity.

- Pope Francis

# Refugees

- To be especially lamented is the condition of so many millions of refugees, and of every group of people suffering persecution sometimes in institutionalized form for racial or ethnic origin or tribal grounds. This persecution on tribal grounds can at times take on the characteristics of genocide. *Justice in the World, Statement of the World Synod of Catholic Bishops* (November 30, 1971), no. 21 ( *Vatican Council II: More Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP [Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1982])

## The Rights of Migrants

- 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 for it, he must be permitted to migrate 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 to the human family, nor of citizenship in the universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men. John Paul II, *Address to the New World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Immigrants* (October 17, 1985)
- The local people, moreover, especially public authorities, should all treat [immigrants] not as mere tools of production but as persons, and must help them to arrange for their families to live with them and to provide themselves with decent living quarters. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church* (December 7, 1965), no. 66 ( *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, SJ [Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1966])
- All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security). *A Catholic Framework for Economic Life, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*

## Working for Justice and Solidarity with the Poor and Vulnerable

- Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, no. 58
- God did not create man for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also "it has pleased God to make men holy and save them not merely as individuals, without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people." . . . This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day on which it will be brought to perfection. Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church* (December 7, 1965), no. 32 ( *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott, SJ [Chicago: Follett Publishing Co., 1966])
- The Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. The Church . . . has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians. *Justice in the World, Statement of the World Synod of Catholic Bishops* (November 30, 1971), no. 36 ( *Vatican Council II: More Post-Conciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, OP [Northport, N.Y.: Costello Publishing Co., 1982])



## Church Leaders on Migrant and Migrant Rights

- In its history, America has experienced many immigrations, as waves of men and women came to its various regions in the hope of a better future. The Church is well aware of the problems created by this situation and is committed to spare no effort in developing her own pastoral strategy among these immigrant people, in order to help them settle in their new land and to foster a welcoming attitude among the local population, in the belief that a mutual openness will bring enrichment to all. Migrants should be met with a hospitable and welcoming attitude which can encourage them to become part of the Church's life, always with due regard for their freedom and their specific cultural identity. - *Ecclesia in America* (January 23, 1999)
- Recalling this great bishop, (Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, bishop and patron of immigrants) my thoughts go to those who are far from their homeland and often also from their families; I hope that they will always meet receptive friends and hearts on their path who are capable of supporting them in the difficulties of every day. Pope Benedict XVI Vatican City, June 5, 2005



- The Church hears the suffering cry of all who are uprooted from their own land, of families forcefully separated, of those who, in the rapid changes of our day, are unable to find a stable home anywhere. She senses the anguish of those without rights, without any security, at the mercy of every kind of exploitation, and she supports them in their unhappiness. [We are called to work] so that every person's dignity is respected, the immigrant is welcomed as a brother or sister, and all humanity forms a united family which knows how to appreciate with discernment the different cultures which comprise it. Pope John Paul II *Message for World Migration Day 2000*
- From the viewpoint of the U.S. bishops, it has been apparent for several years that our immigration system is broken and badly in need of repair. The U.S. Bishops are united in the view that migration is beneficial to our nation economically, socially, and culturally. The strength of our nation comes from its diversity and from the hard work and contributions of immigrants who have come to our shores over the past two hundred years. It is our identity and our soul. The Most Reverend Kevin Farrell, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington and member of the U.S. Catholic Conference of Bishops Committee on Migration
- The reality is that our current system is immoral. While many may condemn the presence of the undocumented in our land, we willingly accept their hard labor, their contributions to our economy, and their cultural and religious spirit which enriches our local communities. While we accept these contributions, we do so at the expense of the human beings who come here not to harm us but to help us. They are often ridiculed, exploited, and abused. This must stop, and this immoral system must be changed. The Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Bishop of Brooklyn, *Statement at the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride*, October 4, 2003
- Let us, Christians and Non-Christians alike, join in a civil discourse over the complex issues of immigration that acknowledges the enormous contributions being made by our immigrant peoples. Together, let us seek solutions to this issue that treat all with the respect and dignity due to every human being, every son and daughter of God. The Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes, Bishop of San Bernardino, *Statement on the Repeal of California SB 60*, December 10, 2003
- Providing a clear route to legal status for longtime residents and providing legal entry to migrants would not only help cure the excesses of a flawed system but ensure that our nation benefits from the contributions of immigrants participating as full members of their communities. Although some in the public square consider any such rule changes a reward for lawbreakers, we should look at the issue holistically and realistically, and understand that the current law is unjust and must be changed. His Eminence Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles, *Editorial in the Los Angeles Times, A Nation That Should Know Better*, June 1, 2005
- We can no longer accept a situation in which some public officials and members of our communities scapegoat immigrants at the same time our nation benefits from their labor. We can no longer accept a status quo in which migrants are compelled to risk their lives in order to support their families. We can no longer accept a reality in which migrants fill jobs critical to Americans and U.S. employers without receiving appropriate wages and benefits. We can no longer tolerate the death of human beings in the desert. Most Reverend James Tamayo, Bishop of Laredo, *Statement at the Justice for Immigrants Launching Press Conference*, May 10, 2005
- The so-called illegals are so not because they wish to defy the law; but, because the law does not provide them with any channels to regularize their status in our country which needs their labor: they are not breaking the law, the law is breaking them. Most Reverend Thomas Wenski, Bishop of Orlando, *Column U.S. immigration policy outdated and unjust toward working Immigrants*, May 13, 2005

