



August 21, 2009

Dear Colleagues in Ministry:

In 2003 the Catholic Bishops of the United States and Mexico jointly issued the pastoral letter, “Strangers No Longer, Together on the Journey of Hope,” to voice their concerns regarding migration and its effects on families, communities and nations. Poverty, civil wars, and economic instability in countries throughout the world increasingly force many to leave their homelands in search of a better life, even at the risk of crossing borders illegally and facing consequences of being caught or even dying in remote desert areas. Our rich heritage of Catholic Social Teaching calls us to honor the life and dignity of all persons, with special concern for those who are most vulnerable. With this in mind, the diocesan Public Policy Committee has selected immigration and farmworker justice as a topic for continued education and as the parish-based advocacy issue for 2009/2010.

Immigration is among the most divisive issues currently being debated in our country. Harsh words replace thoughtful, reasoned discussion resulting in an inability to move forward with much-needed reform of our immigration laws and state labor laws. This mailing provides some tools to help parishes raise up the issue and set a tone for reasoned discussion. It will be followed in November with materials that support February’s Parish Advocacy Weekend.

We invite you to study these issues and pray for all those whose lives are impacted. As Catholic Christians we are called to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, to promote the common good of all. We recognize the need both to protect our own borders and to provide opportunities for those who have resided in the United States, worked, and raised families to earn legal status. We are a nation of immigrants who share rich cultural heritages, talents, and gifts that have made us a great nation.

Your brother in Christ,

*Rev. Brian Cool*

Chairperson, Public Policy Committee, Diocese of Rochester

Enclosed:

- 2 flyers or bulletin inserts
- Homily helps
- Resource list
- Suggested activities
- Parish Conversations on immigration (and other difficult issues)



The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

## DIOCESAN-WIDE PARISH-BASED ADVOCACY PUBLIC POLICY WEEKEND ~ FEBRUARY 13/14, 2010

The Catholic Church in America has traditionally been an immigrant church. In past centuries, waves of German, Irish, and Italian and Polish immigrants brought large numbers of Catholics to our shores. When most of them arrived, with few exceptions, they were free to enter the country. Unfortunately, they were almost immediately met with discrimination and exclusion. In a similar way, Latin American workers now come north seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

The September 11 attacks and the economic downturn magnified traditional biases against immigrants, leaving workers on this side of the border stuck in a shadow economy while those seeking to come north are often forced into dangerous desert crossings.

Aggressive local enforcement has devastated families and communities. Strong anti-immigrant sentiments have prevented the passage of much-needed comprehensive immigration reform. Local efforts to round up and deport undocumented people has also negatively affected the ability of farmers to hire seasonal labor. The exclusion of farmworkers from many of the labor laws that protect workers— overtime pay, a day of rest, employer contributions to the unemployment and workers' compensation funds, and public health protections including sanitation and housing standards— makes it even more challenging for farmers to find resident farm laborers.

Farmworkers make significant contributions to the well-being and wealth of New York State, and should be afforded the same rights, protections and benefits that other workers receive.

The message of the bible and Catholic Social Teaching urges us to address the immigration and farmworker issues:

**Leviticus 19:33-34** — “When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger who sojourns with you shall be as the native among you; for you were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”

**Life and Dignity of the Human Person:** “We believe that every person is precious, people, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.”

**The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:** “...the basic rights of workers must be respected— the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative.”

**Solidarity:** We are one human family; what injures my brother or sister anywhere in the world, injures each of us.



### **The Bishops Call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

The Hispanic Pew Forum estimates that at least twelve million undocumented immigrants live and work in the United States today. The motivations pushing immigrants to risk unauthorized entry into America are varied, but most come with the hope of reuniting with family members already here or to find work that will provide support for their family back home. The existing immigration system has resulted in a growing number of persons in this country in an unauthorized capacity, living in the shadows as they toil in jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. The Church believes that current immigration laws and policies have often led to the undermining of immigrants' human dignity and have kept families apart. The Catholic bishops of the United States have been strong supporters of comprehensive immigration reform, which includes:

- A broad based legalization (permanent residency) of the undocumented of all nationalities;
- Reform of our family-based immigration system to allow family members to reunite with loved ones in the United States;
- Reform of the employment-based immigration system to provide legal pathways for migrants to come and work in a safe, humane, and orderly manner;
- Abandonment of the border "blockade" enforcement strategy;
- Restoration of due process protections for immigrants.

### **Distortions in the Immigration Debate**

Too often, discussions surrounding illegal immigration are reduced to distortions about who they are and what they want. Some say that undocumented immigrants don't pay taxes. In fact, undocumented immigrants pay billions of dollars in sales, income and property taxes each year—directly if they own and indirectly if they rent. According to the Social Security Administration (SSA), undocumented workers pay as much as \$7 billion in Social Security and Medicare taxes each year and have contributed as much as a half trillion dollars since 1984.

Others conclude that we need to close our borders to prevent another catastrophe like 9/11. In fact, seventeen of the nineteen 9/11 terrorists were in the country legally on student visas—the other two had overstayed their visas. By legalizing the undocumented population and creating more visas for workers to enter legally, we better know who is in the country and who is coming, thus making us safer as a nation.

**For more information, please visit: <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/mrp.shtml>**

**2009/2010 Diocesan Public Policy Advocacy Issue**

## Immigration/Farmworker Justice

*“Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”* Luke 18:16

### Homily Helps

*The lives of immigrant farmworkers are made harder by the New York State Legislature’s failure to pass farmworker labor protections and by the U.S. Congress’ failure to pass comprehensive immigration reform. These readings often lend themselves to commenting on our role as people who can act for their benefit. Below are some suggestions of how you might integrate the issue into the Sunday homily.*

September 6, 2009–23<sup>rd</sup> Sunday OT (Labor Day Weekend)

On this Labor Day weekend, we recognize the intrinsic value of human work: that it is a participation in the Creative Nature of God. Our labors should bear good and holy fruit that makes human life better. Jesus does holy work through his loving touch of those who seek healing. There were those who belittled his work. In our society, there are also those who work hard among us but receive, at best, little recognition, and at worst, our criticism and cold shoulders. How do we treat migrant laborers who do good, holy work by harvesting the food that we gratefully consume?



Sept 13, 2009 – 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT

“Go in peace, keep warm and well fed.” St. James has a keen sense of human short-comings, doesn’t he? We find it easy to speak words of comfort but much harder to show it. There are sisters and brothers among us, whom we might support with our words but don’t quite live up to it with our actions. Farm workers, who often work 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year, might receive our kind words and thoughts, but that is not helping them earn a just, living wage that can adequately support them and their families. What needs to be done?



September 20, 2009 – 25<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT (Catechetical Sunday)

“If anyone wishes to be first, let him be the last and the servant of all.”

Throughout society, it is very rare that those who offer the most in the way of service get any attention. Who have we ignored during our daily living? Who are those people who work to serve others (farm labors, hotel employees, gas station attendants, etc.) but so often go neglected? What do we need to do to better recognize and support them?

September 27, 2009 – 26<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT

In the United States, we do not pay the *real* cost of our food. Milk producers are losing \$.05 for each 100 lbs. of milk they sell. Producers are living *very close* to the bottom line. And when they hurt, their hired help bears a significant part of the burden. St. James warns us, yet again, that our lack of desire to make sure people such as farm workers get fair treatment and wages will definitely come back to haunt us.

October 4, 2009 – 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT (Feast of St. Francis)

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews poignantly reminds us that Christ died for all people, bringing each of us to “glory” in him and through him. And because of this, we are called “brothers” and “sisters.” How can we best treat the least among us as equals? How can we reach out to those who suffer because of difficult working conditions, inadequate pay, and such?

October 11, 2009 – 28<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT (Columbus Day Weekend)

Today's readings pose a paradox: in the Book of Wisdom, wealth and riches come to those who seek the Wisdom of God. In the Gospel, the one who is seeking Christ must give up all wealth. One possible solution is that the *extremes* of wealth seem to block us from the Lord. If we have too much, we are caught up in its power, advantages, fame and such. There is no room for God. If we have no wealth, and are destitute, then that gnawing poverty blinds us from the great gift of God's goodness and generous Spirit. Only when we act freely to separate ourselves from that which blocks us from being in a deeper relationship with the Lord are we able to move forward into His Life. There are laborers in our midst who are blocked from being closer to the Lord because they have so little. People such as farm laborers and migrant agricultural workers are on the fringes of society, barely holding on to meager essentials. What can we do need to let go of so that we might better serve them?

29<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT – Oct. 18, 2009

Ah, those "Sons of Thunder" really get themselves into trouble this weekend, don't they? James and John wish to become Jesus' #2 and #3 men, once the Kingdom is established. But, of course Jesus reminds them that the greatest one must be the servant of all. Do we really believe this? Do we hold in highest esteem those people who offer the most menial services to society? Some of the most invisible "servants" are the laborers who pick our fruit and vegetables or milk our cows. Do we even know who they are, let alone give them the honor, respect, and pay they deserve or need?

30<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT – Oct. 25, 2009

"Beggars can't be choosers" the old adage goes. But blind Bartimaeus was empowered to choose: when asked, he requested sight. He could have asked for wealth, power, revenge against abuse, and so much more. All he wanted, though, was to be empowered to live as a whole and healthy person. There are people in our society who silently beg for the same. They don't want special treatment; they just want to be treated as humans of equal dignity and worth. Unfortunately, they do not have a voice in today's society. They are migrant laborers and farm workers to do tasks that others shun. What can we do for them?



All Saints Day – Nov. 1, 2009

The Beatitudes have often been used to defend the position that some people in this world, especially the down-trodden, will receive God's great reward in the after-life. But is it fair or just that we who have the power to *improve* the well-being of the neglected should withhold our compassion because God will reward them in the end? Is that right behavior for a saint?

32<sup>nd</sup> Sunday OT – Nov. 8, 2009

The Church teaches us that God has a preferential option for the poor. The destitute in our midst, as represented in the Scriptures today by the widows, are God's beloved. Can we, who are disciples of Christ, withhold our care for our sisters and brothers who are in need?

33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday OT – Nov. 15, 2009

The prophet Daniel reminds us that "those who lead the many to justice shall shine like the stars forever." As Christians we are called to work hard to do justice by all who are in need. Farm laborers and migrant workers, who are concluding the harvest season at this time, are in desperate need of justice: of fair wages, of benefits, of health care and appropriate work schedules. What can we do to help this to happen?

Feast of Christ the King – Nov. 22, 2009

Christ, our King has a realm that is "not of this world." That is, it is not rooted in worldly customs or values. Rather, it is rooted in the Spirit of God. Every resident of that Kingdom has a right to the goodness that comes from God. Every resident has the obligation to be sure that no one goes without, that no one is mistreated, that no one suffers because of neglect or abuse. Many people in our midst, including migrant workers and farm laborers, often go unnoticed and uncared for. Their wages are inadequate and the benefits are non-existent. What should the Church do about this injustice?

## Bulletin Quotes From *Education for Justice*

Since its founding, the United States has received immigrants from around the world who have found opportunity and safe haven in a new land. The labor, values, and beliefs of immigrants from throughout the world have transformed the United States from a loose group of colonies into one of the leading democracies in the world today.

-U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: **Together on the Journey of Hope,**" 2003, #17

The Church in America must be a vigilant advocate, defending against any unjust restriction the natural right of individual persons to move freely within their own nation and from one nation to another. Attention must be called to the rights of migrants and their families and to respect for their human dignity, even in cases of non-legal immigration.

-**John Paul II, "Ecclesia in America," 1999, # 65**

Our concern as pastors for the dignity and rights of migrants extends to pastoral responses as well as public policy issues. The Church in our two countries [United States and Mexico] is constantly challenged to see the face of Christ, crucified and risen, in the stranger. The whole Church is challenged to live the experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-25), as they are converted to be witnesses of the Risen Lord after they welcome him as a stranger.

Faith in the presence of Christ in the migrant leads to a conversion of mind and heart, which leads to a renewed spirit of communion and to the building of structures of solidarity to accompany the migrant.

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: **Together on the Journey of Hope,**" 2003, # 40

Catholic teaching has a long and rich tradition in defending the right to migrate. Based on the life and teachings of Jesus, the Church's teaching has provided the basis for the development of basic principles regarding the right to migrate for those attempting to exercise their God-given human rights. Catholic teaching also states that the root causes of migration—poverty, injustice, religious intolerance, armed conflicts—must be addressed so that migrants can remain in their homeland and support their families.

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: **Together on the Journey of Hope,**" 2003, #28

In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty and persecution are rampant, the presumption is that persons must migrate in order to support and protect themselves and that nations who are able to receive them should do so whenever possible. It is through this lens that we assess the

current migration reality between the United States and Mexico.

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: **Together on the Journey of Hope,**" 2003, #39

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.

— U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity," 2000

Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access to those things required for human decency—food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life.

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility," 2007, # 49

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.

-John Paul II, Message for World Migration Day, 2000, #6

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 from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

- U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: **Together on the Journey of Hope,**" 2003, # 38

Present political trends appear clear and slanted in the direction of responding to the more emotional and vocal demands of public opinion for control and integration. In the long run, however, a fair and effective solution will come from a comprehensive approach that embraces all policy components: the rights of the state and of the receiving community, of the migrants, and of the international common good.

- Holy See on Migrant Workers, "A Comprehensive **Perspective Is Needed**", 12/7/2007, #5

## Resources

### Videos/DVDs Available through the Diocesan AV Library

#### *Dying to Live \*\*Highly recommended\*\**

*This program offers a look at the human face of the migrant worker. It considers who they are, why they leave their homes and what they face in their journey. Drawing on the insights of Pulitzer Prize winning photographers, theologians, church and congressional leaders, activists, musicians and the immigrants themselves, the film explores the places of conflict, pain and hope along the US-Mexico border.*

33 minutes divided into segments that can be shown separately; Senior high-adult

Groody River Films. Produced by the Univ. of Notre Dame Institute of Latino Studies

#### *A Treasure Revealed: Migrant Workers in Our Midst*

In this program viewers will learn about the plight of migrant workers in western New York who have come to this area to make a better life for their families but who work long and hard in low-paying, difficult jobs.

Viewers will see how the Catholic community is ministering to them and will be challenged to consider how they might welcome and assist these members of God's family living in their community.

20 minutes; Senior high-adult; Guide

Diocese of Rochester & AV8 Productions, 2003

#### *The Line in the Sand: Stories from the US/Mexico Border (VCR)*

In August of 2005, Catholic Relief Services sent a team of writers and actors to the Arizona-Mexico border to interview people affected by migration. They spoke with ranchers, government officials, activists and the migrants themselves. The team turned those interviews into a stage performance that is presented in this video.

49 minutes; Senior high-adult

Produced by Maryknoll, Baltimore, MD : Catholic Relief Services, 2006.

#### *The Ties That Bind: Stories Behind the Immigration Controversy*

This program roams both sides of the Texas-Mexico border to present the human face of immigrants and their families. The production unfolds in three twenty-minute segments. "Good Neighbors and Tall Fences" focuses on how U.S. **immigration** policies and transnational firms contribute to social and economic disparity between the U. S. and Mexico. "Just Between Us" documents the struggles of immigrants to become accepted U.S. citizens. "The Common Bond" explores shared faith, family and work values.

56 minutes; Senior high-adult; Guide

Maryknoll World Productions, 1996. Maryknoll, NY :

#### *Strangers No Longer (VCR)*

This program examines the issues surrounding **immigration** in the United States. It is divided into four segments. "Call to Welcome" looks at the biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and recalls the migratory nature of our ancestors in faith. "Our Immigrant Heritage" reminds viewers that the United States is a nation of immigrants with a long tradition of struggling to incorporate people from many cultures. "New Realities" explores the tenacious condition of the current **immigration** system, tells some stories of individual immigrants and describes the U.S. Bishops' plan for immigrant reform. Finally, "Living the Faith" illustrates how some parish communities are attempting to live the call the welcome the stranger in their midst.

12 minutes; Senior high-adult

Groody River Films and University of Notre Dame, 2007

## **Internet Resources**

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

The Justice for Immigrants campaign is a program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, along with a diverse group of Catholic organizations. The campaign is designed to unite and mobilize a growing network of institutions persons of good faith in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform.

**www.fwjjustice.org** The Farm Worker Justice Fund, Inc. (FJF) is a nonprofit organization that works to improve the living and working conditions of migrant and seasonal farm workers throughout the United States.

[www.nplc.org](http://www.nplc.org) The National Pastoral Life Center has produced *Resources for Dialogue* as a guide for groups and *A Catholic Dialogue on Immigration* to guide parishes in conversations on the immigration issue.

## **Books/Articles**

*In All Things: A Jesuit Journal of the Social Apostolate: Immigration and the Church*, Winter 2006-2007 <http://www.inallthings.org/>

Excellent resource as a study document. Presents background, challenges, Catholic social teaching and diverse views.

*Strangers No Longer: Together on a Journey of Hope*

U.S. Catholic Bishops' 2003 statement on immigration. Available at

<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml> or in abridged form through St. Anthony Press as a *Catholic Update* at [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)).

*With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farm Workers* – Daniel Rothenberg

*Enrique's Journey* by Sonia Nazario

*No One Is Illegal: Fighting Racism and State Violence on the U.S.-Mexico Border*

By Justin Akers Chacon and Mike Davis

## **Programs**

*JustFaith Module*

**Crossing Borders: Migration, Theology, and the Human Journey**

Immigration is a complex issue that is reshaping the cultural, economic and political landscape of the planet. Anyone who speaks of simple solutions either does not understand it or is not listening. Each group in the immigration debate makes rightful claims to issues like economic stability, American jobs, cultural integrity, fiscal constraints, national security, human rights, property rights, labor rights, law and order, and many other issues. Many are divided over this issue precisely because it creates fault lines between many values that are important to us. Finding common ground amidst the fractious debate is not easy, which is the reason why it has become such an incendiary, political issue.

This eight session module provides participants a chance to find common ground and to discover more about themselves, our God and the millions of people who are on the move in every part of the world.

Registration for the module is \$100 per parish; additional costs include a per person cost of \$50.50 for books and a per group cost of \$85.00 for DVDs. For more information, contact Mary Wright: [mary@justfaith.org](mailto:mary@justfaith.org).

## Parish Conversations on Immigration (and other difficult issues)

A common trait of our modern world is the tendency for people to sort themselves into like-minded groups, associating primarily with those who agree with them and using media sources that support their opinions. The result is a trend to strident, one-sided opinions on difficult issues such as immigration. Church congregations have a broader constituency, but discussion of polarizing issues is often avoided in order to steer clear of divisiveness.

Because we share a common set of core values, the parish should be one place where it's safe to have difficult conversations on important issues. Communication builds community. Without honest conversations, interactions remain superficial.

There are a number of models for establishing productive conversation among divergent populations. **JustFaith** offers packaged, scripted programs that help people cross boundaries safely. **The Catholic Common Ground Initiative** of the National Pastoral Life Center has produced *Resources for Dialogue* as a guide for groups and *A Catholic Dialogue on Immigration* to guide parishes in conversations on the immigration issue.

Using some ground rules and a basic format, parishes should be able to shape a model that works to meet their individual needs.

Key to any productive conversation is

- Begin with prayer
- Have a skilled facilitator who is able to refrain from taking sides while encouraging participation.
- A commitment to active, attentive listening
- A desire to understand the experience of people who hold opposing viewpoints
- Having the same group commit to several sessions so that adequate time can be spent establishing ground rules, building rapport and a sense of safety that allows honest participation
- Find a common language (What can we all agree on?)
- Respect the goodness of other participants even when disagreeing with their opinions
- Knowing that none of us has the whole truth and that we have things to learn from the lived experiences of others
- Recognition that dialogue is different from debate; we are here to understand each other, not to change each others' opinions

Basic outline of a session:

- Begin with prayer (centered in God's presence/awareness of God's participation/short and neutral)
- Ask a question that can elicit an experience from all participants
- Watch a video segment, listen to a speaker, or pre-read a book or article to establish a common experience for discussion
- Discussion question(s) with a facilitated dialogue
- Homework assignment
- Close with prayer

The following "Conversation on Immigration receives its inspiration from a number of sources including the Catholic Common Ground Initiative's *A Catholic Dialogue on Immigration*.

## Model for Four-Session Conversation on Immigration

### Invitation:

St. \_\_\_\_\_'s social ministry (or adult education) committee invites you to participate in a "Conversation on Immigration." The conversation will consist of a series of four evening (or morning/afternoon) dialogues (provide time and dates) with the goal of hearing and understanding different viewpoints. Requirements for participation: a willingness to listen respectfully, to share your own opinion without judging others, and to try to understand opposing viewpoints. Pre-registration is required.

### Preparation:

A group of 12-15 is ideal; if more than 15 sign up, you may want to find an additional facilitator and split them in two. A preliminary conversation with each registrant would be helpful to ensure that he or she is agreeable to the ground rules.

Choose a comfortable spot, preferably with an open seating arrangement and provide pitchers of water and/or coffee/tea.

### Notes:

This model is intended to be adapted to meet the needs of the parish. It can be shortened or lengthened as needed. Some sections are loosely modeled on the Catholic Common Ground Initiative's *A Catholic Dialogue on Immigration*. Their unit, which includes many useful tools on dialogue and facilitation, may be ordered for \$5.00 at <https://nplc.org/store/categories.php?category=Catholic-Common-Ground-Initiative>

### Materials

**1<sup>st</sup> Week:** nametags, bell, newsprint or flipchart, "Strangers No Longer video

**2<sup>nd</sup> Week:** nametags, bell, newsprint or flipchart, "Dying to Live" DVD, copies of *In All Things: Immigration and the Church*, Winter 2006-2007 or directions for downloading it from <http://www.jesuit.org/PublicationsMedia/InAllThings/default.aspx>

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week:** nametags, bell, newsprint or flipchart, optional guest speaker, materials for activity (see Week 3 "suggested activity")

**4<sup>th</sup> Week:** nametags, bell, newsprint or flipchart, "Dying to Live" DVD, refreshments

## First Week

### Prayer (5 minutes)

Ask participants to settle themselves into God's presence and reflect briefly on some moment that day when a kind word, a smile, or an experience of the earth's beauty brought them an awareness of God. Read: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mt 18:20). Take a few minutes again to be present to the awareness of Jesus in this promise.

### Welcome, introductions, establishing ground rules (20 minutes)

Welcome the participants and let them know you appreciate their courage in being willing to engage in this process. Talk briefly about the difference between debate and dialogue – that the goal here is not to change anyone's opinion or for one viewpoint to "win" rather the goal is to engage in honest conversation in order to understand each other better and to move beyond the kind of divisive rhetoric that is becoming more and more common. Out of that conversation we hope to get to know each other better, learn from each other and build a stronger sense of community within our parish.

Invite participants to introduce themselves by name, how long they've lived in the community and something they'd like the group to know about themselves. Ask that introductions be kept to a couple sentences. Then ask them to suggest some ground rules, being sure that they include important elements such as

- making sure others have had a chance to speak before one speaks a second time
- active listening
- questions only to clarify understanding, not to judge or diminish what others have said
- respectful language

### Breaking Ground (40 minutes)

Explain that you will ask a question then give everyone a few minutes to think about their response. Then each will have 1-2 minutes (shorter if the group is quite large) to respond. Anyone is free to pass if they are not ready to respond when their turn comes. After going around the room, those who have passed may add their responses if they like. Others should just listen, not ask questions. Indicate that you will signal (ring a bell...) at the end of 2 minutes to let them know that they should complete their thought and move on to the next person. Initial questions should be neutral and intended to introduce participants to one another.

Sample questions:

- Could you tell about a time when you felt out of place, as if you didn't belong?
- What would you be doing if you hadn't come here today?
- When did your ancestors come to this country? From where?

### Video and Discussion (40 minutes)

Explain that values often define the differences in opinions about immigration, but we most likely share some values even when we disagree about policy. For example, the U.S. Bishops often speak of the importance of keeping families together; we hear others speak of security or protecting American jobs. Ask participants to try to identify some of the values that are raised as you watch the video *Strangers No Longer* (12 minutes). Show the video then record on newsprint some of the values that participants identify (5 minutes).

Ask: "What values do you bring to the conversation about U.S. immigration policy?"\*(P.17 CCGI) The same rules apply as in the last section. After everyone has had a chance to speak ask: "Would you be willing to share a time when a value you hold about immigration conflicted with another value that is important to you? In other words, have you ever felt pulled in two directions about immigration?" (p. 17CCGI)

### Homework and Closing (5 minutes)

Express your appreciation for the honest sharing and respectful listening. Invite everyone back for the next session and ask everyone to read the U.S. Bishops' document *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* (available at <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml> or in abridged form through St. Anthony Press as a *Catholic Update* at [www.americancatholic.org](http://www.americancatholic.org)).

### Close with a prayer

## Second Week

### Prayer (5 minutes)

Ask participants to settle themselves into God's presence and reflect briefly on some moment that day when a kind word, a smile, or an experience of the earth's beauty brought them an awareness of God. Use an appropriate prayer, for example:

God the Father, I give you thanks for all the marvels you have created.  
I praise you and bless you for the inestimable grace of life that you give us.  
Transform me, make me a better Christian,  
a living testimony of your mercy and of your power.

Strip me, Lord, of all roots of bitterness, of false pride and haughtiness of heart.  
Make me meek and humble of heart as was our Lord Jesus Christ,  
And never let me wound with my words or actions the dignity of any person.

Put in my heart the ardent desire to work earnestly for the poor and the needy.  
Show me the garment with which you closed me  
The day that I received you as Lord and Savior of my life.  
May I wear those garments at the service of my neighbor and of this community.

Use me, Lord, for your work.  
Ligia de Milla, El Salvador *Prayer Without Borders*

### Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Welcome everyone and remind them of the agreed-upon ground rules.

### Discussion starter (20 minutes)

Remind participants of last week's conversation about values. Ask participants to identify the values expressed in the Bishops' document *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. List the values on newsprint and post.

### Shared experience (60 minutes)

Introduce the film, *Dying to Live*. Show the first two segments, "Introduction" and "The Face of the Migrant." then pose any or all of these questions for discussion:

- 1) In what way has your life been a journey?
- 2) What do you think about the immigrant as a threat to your job, home or well-being?
- 3) What are some of the values raised by the film? In what ways are these values similar or competing with your own?
- 4) How is Jesus present in the migrant?

Remind participants of the need to listen carefully to one another, keep comments brief and give time for all to speak. It may be helpful to break into groups of 5-7 and have one member give a summary report back to the larger group.

### Homework and Closing (5 minutes)

Express your appreciation for the honest sharing and respectful listening. Invite everyone back for the next session and ask participants to read the *In All Things: Immigration and the Church*, Winter 2006-2007. (We have permission to use and distribute as long as it is not "sold or used in a for-profit endeavor." This is an excellent collection of articles designed to present different aspects of the issue. You may want to print (23 pages) and distribute, choose only some of the articles, or ask those who have access to a computer to either read it online or copy it themselves. - available at <http://www.jesuit.org/PublicationsMedia/InAllThings/default.aspx>)

### Close with a prayer (Matthew 25: 31-46 might be appropriate)

## **Third Week**

### **Prayer (5 minutes)**

Ask participants to settle themselves into God's presence and reflect briefly on some moment that day when a kind word, a smile, or an experience of the earth's beauty brought them an awareness of God. "The Prayer of St. Francis" or another short prayer could follow.

### **Welcome (5-10 minutes)**

Welcome everyone and remind them of the agreed-upon ground rules or any other dialogue tools that may be helpful for the particular group.

### **Opening Question (20 minutes)**

Say something like: "You will have to use your imaginations for this discussion, but we're going to try to put ourselves in the place of the immigrant. Imagine that suddenly the borders to our county (Monroe, Wayne, Chemung...) were closed and people were no longer free to travel to adjoining counties. Imagine also that our county was poor with few job opportunities while the adjoining, wealthier counties had jobs that were available to people who managed to get across the border. You and others in your family were out of work and had no money for food or adequate shelter. The future looks bleak for your children. What would you do? We'll go around the room and each of you has up to two minutes to respond if you care to."

**Optional Activity:** Have a guest speaker who can give a presentation on the roles and perspectives of different groups who are involved with immigration. **(30 minutes)**

### **Suggested Activity (40 minutes)**

- Ask, "How many different groups can you identify who have roles in the current issue of illegal immigration?" (i.e. Mexican worker, American low-skilled worker, Border Patrol or ICE official, Catholic priest or nun, factory owner, farmer, those who receive services from workers at low cost -- nursing home residents, hotel guests, homeowners having landscaping or construction completed, fresh produce or dairy shoppers - family in Mexico receiving remittances, etc.).
- Divide into groups of six.
- Choose 6 (or a number that lets you evenly divide the group) of these roles. Have available markers and cards (large index cards or ½ sheets of sturdy paper) with strings attached so they can go around participants' necks and be worn across the chest. Write one of the six roles on each of the cards, repeat, using the same roles for each of the small groups. Each group gets one set of cards. Each person gets one card to wear. Groups stand in small circles facing the other group members.
- Pose the question: "What are the values I bring to the immigration issue?" Each person responds briefly representing the role on his or her card. After going around the circle once, pass the cards to the left and go around again with each person responding in his or her new role.
- Continue with the same question for a while or pose new questions, continuing to change roles within the group.

### **Homework and Closing (5 minutes)**

Express your appreciation for the honest sharing and respectful listening. Invite everyone back for the next session and ask participants to pay careful attention to the news this week, being especially attentive to any stories that could be connected to the issue of immigration. The stories could be local or international. Be ready to share any thoughts that come up during this exercise.

Invite volunteers to bring some food for a closing celebration or shared meal.

### **Close with a prayer**

## **Fourth Week**

### **Prayer (5 minutes)**

Ask participants to settle themselves into God's presence and reflect briefly on some moment that day when a kind word, a smile, or an experience of the earth's beauty brought them an awareness of God. Use an appropriate prayer.

### **Welcome (5-10 minutes)**

Welcome everyone and remind them of the agreed-upon ground rules.

### **Opening Discussion (15 minutes)**

Ask if anyone has thoughts about their experience of being attentive to the news this week. Either proceed using the 2-minute rule or just let people voluntarily share.

### **Shared experience (60 minutes)**

Show the last three segments of *Dying to Live*, "Push-Pull and Politics" and "The Journey" and "The Border and Beyond" then pose any or all of these questions for discussion:

- 1) What forces are pushing immigrants? What forces are pulling them?
- 2) What would happen to agriculture and the service industry in the U.S. without the labor of immigrants?
- 3) How does the undocumented status of workers affect both the workers and our communities? Would it be better if there were a way to provide legal documentation for those who are here?
- 4) Some people say, "They broke the law, they must be punished." Others say, "The law is broken, it must be changed." What do you think?
- 5) Do you agree or disagree that we are all one family?
- 6) Which Catholic values do you think are the most important to keep in mind when considering issues about immigrants?
- 7) Have your feelings about immigrants changed since we began our discussion?

Remind participants of the need to listen carefully to one another, keep comments brief and give time for all to speak. It may be helpful to break into groups of 5-7 and have one member give a summary report back to the larger group.

### **Closing and next steps (15 minutes)**

Express your appreciation for the honest sharing and respectful listening. Ask the group if they are interested in taking any next steps in response to what we've talked about these past weeks. Some options:

- Attend one of the Sunday Spanish liturgies that are held throughout the diocese. If possible, arrange for a shared meal with willing participants and translators. Go without judgment and with a desire to learn about people's lives and stories.
- Make a joint commitment to reject biased language and encourage others to form listening circles.
- Write to legislators (or letters to the editor) to express your own opinions on immigration
- Participate in or organize a service project for migrant workers

### **Close with a prayer**

### **Celebrate with refreshments**