

To: Youth Ministers, DRE's

From: Diocesan Public Policy Committee, Immigration Sub-committee

Background:

Every year the Diocesan Public Policy Committee chooses one Advocacy Issue. This year the Advocacy Issue is Comprehensive Immigration Reform. In February 2010, parishioners will be asked to support this issue through contact with lawmakers. In the past, the support of the Catholic Church has actually affected the shape of legislation.

The principles of Catholic Social Teaching call us to live out our faith and be involved.

A project:

In order to make informed decisions, education about the Advocacy Issue is important:

- Attached you will find photos of area migrants and a series of quotes, facts, and poems. These photos and the stories of the migrants that accompany them should stimulate conversation and enhance your youth's understanding of Catholic Social Teaching.
- After time spent in discussion, please download and print large copies of the photos you feel are most effective. Print out or copy quotes, bytes, poems, etc. and create a bulletin board or poster that can be displayed for parishioners, thus sharing a bit of the reality of the migrant's life.
- Understanding the reality of the lives of others helps us to begin to live in *solidarity* with them and to advocate for their *dignity*. Putting a face to the statistics is very important.

Timeline:

To be effective and timely, posters and displays should be in place in parishes by mid-January.

Additional Resource: *Welcoming Christ in the Migrant*, download at www.nccbuscc.org/mrs/nmw/Booklet_English.pdf

Background Information

Biblical

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.”

The prophet **Daniel** reminds us that “those who lead the many to justice shall shine like the stars forever.”

Matthew 25: 34-36 — “Come, you who are blessed by my father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me....”

Catholic Social Teaching

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.

Some thought provoking statements

In our society, there are 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?

Some of the most invisible “servants” are the laborers who pick our fruit and vegetables, milk our cows, clean our hotel rooms. Do we even know who they are, let alone give them the honor, respect, and pay they deserve or need?

The Church teaches us that God has a preferential option for the poor. Can we, who are disciples of Christ, withhold our care for our sisters and brothers who are in need?

As Christians we are called to work hard to do justice by all who are in need. Farm laborers and migrant workers, who harvest our food, 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?

As reported in local newspaper, September 2008

Feds Raid Trailer Park, Seize Illegals

“...Another woman shared that she heard all the commotion and slipped out of the rear of the trailer, grabbing her five year old son and ran toward the Geneva Road where she hid out until late in the afternoon. She contacted sources at the church for advice and was picked up, fed and found a safe place to stay.”

Additional Migrant Stories

Once, when I was sharing a meal with a group of men at a migrant camp west of Brockport, one of the men told of how he had come to be picking cabbages in northern New York. He was older than the others, probably in his 40s; his family was back in southern Mexico living on the small farm he owned. He had farmed there for many years, mostly growing corn, but the North American Trade Agreement had put him out of business. He could not compete with the subsidized corn pouring into Mexico from the United States, so he came north so his family could survive. His skilled labor was valued here, but he would rather be farming his own land while living with his family.

Two years ago the Border Patrol began to show up in Sodus just in time for the Sunday afternoon Spanish Mass, sometimes circling the church, sometimes driving by. They stopped one Mexican man across the street from Epiphany as he rode his bicycle to church. He was detained and eventually deported. Another man was also picked up on his way to church. Attendance at the Spanish Mass went from hundreds to a handful. Even people with legal documents were afraid they might be picked up and detained. When group of people from Sodus and supporters from other communities began to stand outside the church during Mass, the Border Patrol mostly stayed away from the church. Young men who used to come in from the farms to go to church and socialize with friends from their home villages quit coming and remain isolated.

One man who was picked up and sent back to Mexico last fall left behind his wife and young children. The children were born here so were U.S. citizens, but the mother was undocumented, the picking season was over and she had no income. Even if she could afford to travel south, it's very difficult to acquire the necessary passports for children when one parent is no longer in the country. The mother and children were left behind with no income and no safety net since undocumented immigrants do not qualify for any social services. The family survived the winter on donated food and clothing.

This past Sunday, while we were standing watch outside the Church of the Epiphany in Sodus during the Spanish Mass, a woman from Lima, NY told me that her neighbors had disappeared a few weeks ago. Six men and two women had disappeared in an overnight raid, leaving their trailer and their possessions behind.

A farmer from Wolcott decided to take his longtime worker and the worker's visiting family for a ride in his boat on Sodus Bay. Border Patrol stopped the boat and demanded documents from the brown skinned people on the boat, not from the farmer or his family members. The worker and his family were here with legal work visas, but did not have their documents on the boat with them. All the people of Mexican descent were detained.

A young family came across the border to try to raise money to get medical care for a desperately sick child. They found work near Sodus. Last Saturday, as they drove into town to run errands, they saw Border Patrol officers parked up the street. They drove by, parked at the grocery store and the husband went in to cash his paycheck. When he came out the Border Patrol was still watching their vehicle. The couple grew afraid and got out and walked across the street to the Church of the Epiphany, which is private property. First, they knocked at the door of the Parish Center, but no one was there, so they came around and knocked at the locked front door of the Church. Right then, the Border Patrol came into the Church Parking lot, got out of their vehicle and came up to the family who were standing on the front steps of the church. The Border Patrol arrested the husband on the steps of the church; the wife ran away with her son and was not detained.



With These Hands

by Angelia-Micaela Salerno

A hand you don't know
offers hot peppers, ripe
tomatoes unblemished
to your white plate,

invisible blessings...

holy leaves

brush your lips,

and except for the heat
you feel unchanged,

not realizing by whom
you have been touched

Con Estos Manos

By Angelia-Micaela Salerno

Una mano que tú
no conoces te ofrece
los pimientos
tomates maduras

bendiciones invisibles . . .

hojas santas

tus labios rozan,

y except por el calor
tú no te sientes distinto,

inconsciente de quien
te ha tocado.

