

Justice, Peace and Life

August 2013



we are one family under God

A loud knock on the door in the middle of the night. Officers demand to see your papers. They drag you away. Your children are left behind and don't know where you are being taken.

This isn't Stalinist Russia, it's upstate New York, in the diocese of Rochester. Some of our neighbors—people who live in our communities, work in local restaurants, harvest the produce we eat— live in constant fear of that knock on the door which would lead them to being deported. Some have been taken away just outside church on their way to Mass! They come to this country for the same reasons we did, or our ancestors did— in search of a decent livelihood, freedom, and a better life for their children. Imagine the desperate poverty that would drive people to leave their homes, their cultures and their families and risk their lives crossing the desert to enter this country, then take low-paying, often exploitative jobs to support their loved ones. As hard as their life is, getting deported back to the poverty they left is even worse. What “crime” have they committed? They crossed the border without going through an immigration check point. They have no visas to enter the U.S. because it is next to impossible for someone without an advanced educational degree to get one. These are not people who *want* to skirt the system; these are people whom the system squashes. The Catholic Church has long called for comprehensive reform to this unjust, broken immigration system.

an immigrant
I was a ~~stranger~~
and you welcomed me.

Matt. 25:35

Jesus

www.stcatholicsisters.org

SPEAK OUT TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

Steps You Can Take in support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform

1. Send a message to your Representative in Congress at www.justiceforimmigrants.org/index.shtml
2. Organize petition signing during or after Mass
3. Visit your Representative's home office; contact the Justice & Peace staffer from your area about scheduled meetings (see reverse for their phone numbers)
4. Ask your pastor to talk about immigration reform in his homily and to include prayers for passage of the legislation; organize a special prayer service on immigration reform with other faith communities
5. Post this notice on your parish web site and social media:

_____ parish joins the U.S. Catholic Bishops in encouraging Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform that

Provides a path to citizenship for undocumented persons in the country;

Preserves family unity as a corner-stone of our national immigration system;

Provides legal paths for low-skilled immigrant workers to come and work in the United States;

Restores due process protections to our immigration enforcement policies;

Addresses the root causes (push factors) of migration, such as persecution and economic disparity.

Why does the Church advocate for immigration reform? Why should I care?

*The estimated 11 million undocumented people in the US are all Children of God; no one made in the Image of God is “illegal”. (Let’s stop using that dehumanizing term for our brothers and sisters.) Their human dignity demands a system in which they can come out of the shadows and stop living in fear.

*The Scriptures are crystal clear in the command to “treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you” (Leviticus 19:34) and to welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35).

*As Blessed John Paul II wrote in *Laborem Exercens*, people have the “right to leave [their] native land for various motives-and also the right to return-in order to seek better conditions of life in another country.”

*The current immigration system keeps husbands and wives apart and separates parents from their children, because it takes years for an immigrant who has obtained citizenship to obtain visas for loved ones to enter the U.S. It also rips families apart when some members are deported and others who were born here stay. This shreds the unity of marriage and family.

*Immigrant workers without documents are vulnerable to wage theft and abuse on the job because they don’t know their rights or won’t speak up out of fear. They need a way to regularize their status to avoid being exploited.

*Young people who were brought to this country as children and who view themselves as Americans deserve the chance to receive an education and reach their potential, instead of living in constant stress that they will be deported back to places they don’t even remember.

*Since 1998, an estimated 5,500 people– adults and children– have perished trying to cross into the United States through the Sonoran Desert. Meanwhile, the U.S. government spends more money on border patrol- nearly **\$18 billion** in the 2012 fiscal year - then on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined.

Web sites with abundant resources for bulletins, liturgical ministers and social ministry committees:

www.dor.org/index.cfm/catholic-charities/public-policy/comprehensive-immigration-reform/

<http://fastaction.us/>

www.justiceforimmigrants.org/Summer2013ResourcesAugustRecessParishandAdvocacyMaterials.shtml

Immigration Reform from the Heart of God

Heart of God, full of mercy, watch over our sister and brother immigrants.

Protect them from harm even as they suffer mistreatment and humiliations on their way.

Touch with Your goodness the hearts of us who see them pass by.

Break open our hearts to embrace them and the gift that they are to our communities.

Heart of God, full of compassion, give our brothers and sisters in Congress the gift of compassion.

Open their eyes to the pain and longing of those affected by their decisions.

Give them wisdom as they struggle to repair our unjust immigration system.

Break open their hearts to embrace the dreams of our immigrant parents, siblings, and friends.

Heart of God, full of love, we give You glory for all the blessings You have given us.

Help us to share those blessings with others that we may all know that You are

a God of mercy, a God of compassion, a God of love.

Break open our hearts that we might embrace the challenge to build a land, a nation, a community where all are welcome.

-from the Interfaith Immigration Coalition

Justice & Peace Ministry Staff of Catholic Charities

Monroe 585-546-7220 Marvin Mich ext. 7021; MMich@cfrochester.org / Ruth Marchetti ext. 7099; RMarchetti@cfrochester.org

Chemung/Schuylers/Tioga Kathy Dubel 607-734-9784 ext. 2135; KDubel@dor.org

Cayuga/Ontario/ Seneca/Tompkins/Yates Laurie Konwinski 607-272-5062 ext. 12; LKonwinski@dor.org

Livingston Jack Balinsky 585-328-3228 ext. 1323; Balinsky@dor.org

Steuben Lynda Lowin 607-776-8085 ext. 217; LLowin@dor.org

Wayne Deacon Jim Nail 315-524-2611 ext. 18; JNail@dor.org