

# DIOCESE OF ORANGE



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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### BISHOPS' ASK LAITY TO FAST FOR IMMIGRATION REFORM:

*"Hunger for Justice" Lenten Campaign Announced During  
Ash Wednesday Prayer Service*

**ORANGE, Calif., (February 21, 2007)** – Most faithful regard Lent as a time for reflection and consideration of how personal lives or values might be changed for the better. The formal liturgical period begins with Ash Wednesday when Catholics the world over are reminded of this passing temporal existence and the maxim “ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The ashes symbolize how all human life one-day comes to an end; they encourage the recipient to make positive contributions to their environment as well as repent for past sins.

Locally, this symbolism took on new meaning with a call from Roman Catholic bishops and the Diocese of Orange to add social action to personal Lenten commitments. The *"Hunger for Justice"* campaign asks Catholics and other persons of faith to fast one day during a one-week Lenten period. The campaign also asks participants to communicate their hunger for justice to their political representatives by way of a provided mailing card. The fast for “comprehensive immigration reform” was initially conceived by Diocese of Orange, Auxiliary Bishop, Jaime Soto.

“His Holiness has advised that immigration is a global concern and should never be viewed solely as a problem but also as an opportunity. We are asking Catholics and others to dedicate at least one day of fasting during the week of March 26-30. Individuals will communicate their social action by forwarding a card to elected representatives and calling for comprehensive immigration reform,” said Soto. The program was formally announced during Ash Wednesday services at St. Boniface Catholic church, Anaheim.

The commonly understood Lenten period has focused on denial as a form of repentance for sins. In more recent times, there is a renewed appreciation of the Lenten penitential practices as a demonstration of solidarity with the suffering Christ present in those who are poor and weak. This Lenten solidarity makes real the hope and promise of the Easter message and strive to lessen the polemics of the current immigration debate. “In

Solidarity with the poor and the immigrant we will hunger for justice and look forward with hope to a comprehensive immigration reform,” Soto added.

Any fasting modality is acceptable. Caution for the elderly and younger participants is recommended. The week-long *Hunger for Justice* effort will culminate on the Friday before Palm Sunday, March 30. “This is more than a prayerful gesture on the part of those choosing to fast. By communicating their sacrifice to elected officials they will help drive home the message that the hunger for a positive change in our immigration law is a serious concern for many American Catholics. It will be a clear demonstration of how self-sacrifice can create the fraternal bonds that can make us stronger and safer. This is a Lenten message that can give hope to all,” concluded Soto.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) advocates equitable immigration legislation. The USCCB encourages immigration reform legislation that provides a workable earned legalization program with a path to citizenship for the undocumented, significant backlog reductions for family-based visas, and a viable temporary workers program that protects both U.S. and foreign-born workers.

The late John Paul II was a tireless advocate on behalf of immigrants and refugees. His words still carry a moral urgency for today:

“I was a stranger and you welcomed me’ (Matthew 25:35) Today the illegal migrant comes before us like that ‘stranger’ in whom Jesus asks to be recognized. To welcome him and to show him solidarity is a duty of hospitality and fidelity to Christian identity itself.” -Pope John Paul II, Annual Message for World Migration Day, 1995.

For more information on the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on the issue of immigration reform please visit: [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org) .

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