

“Catholic Tradition and Teaching on Migrants and Newcomers”

by Donald Kerwin*

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I wanted to thank the Office of Urban Affairs for this kind invitation to speak on Catholic teaching and migration. I particularly appreciate the opportunity to speak to people who live this teaching day in and out.

Thomas Merton wrote that “[t]he best you can do is write something or say something that will serve as an occasion for someone else to realize what God wants of him.”¹ This will be my goal tonight. What does God want of us? The answer is always the same. To love God and neighbor. To love our brothers and sisters. Archbishop Romero, the Catholic martyr from the Archdiocese of San Salvador, told a parable to illustrate how to recognize our “brothers and sisters.” A man is watching a house burn. He naturally hesitates to risk his life to rescue those inside. However, when he learns that his family is trapped inside, all doubt vanishes and he rushes in. The challenge, Archbishop Romero said, is to recognize all people in need as our brothers and sisters. As Pope Benedict XVI recent put it: “Anyone who needs me, and whom I can help, is my neighbor.”² Who are immigrants? They are our “neighbors,” our “brothers and sisters.”

Catholic Social Teaching

Let me start with an obvious point: as a Church, we are intimately familiar with migration. Christ came into the world a migrant. He and his family fled King Herod. He called himself “the way, the truth, and the life” (Jn. 14:6). In his public ministry, he had nowhere to lay his head. He asked his disciples to follow in his path. The theologian Peter Phan has said that the historical record of the early Church simply assumed that Christians belonged to immigrant communities. The word “pároikos” is used in the New Testament to describe believers. It means a temporary resident, a guest, a person on the move. It is the root of our word “parish.” In our tradition, a parish is where migrants gather to worship.

Migration is also our Church’s reality – past and present – in the United States. By 1920,

¹Thomas Merton, Seeds of Contemplation, (Dell Publishing Company, Inc. 1953), p. 176.

²Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Es*, No. 15 (Dec. 25, 2005).

immigrants comprised 75 percent of U.S. Catholics.³ That same year, Connecticut was home to nearly 380,000 foreign-born residents, roughly the same number that it has today. These earlier immigrants came in growing numbers from Southern and Eastern Europe, particularly Italy and Poland. Large numbers had also migrated from Ireland, Germany, Scotland, Wales, Hungary, Sweden, Austria, Russian and Czechoslovakia. In response to their needs, the Church created, adapted or expanded all of its (now) characteristic institutions – parishes, schools, hospitals, charities, religious communities, mutual aid societies, and social groups. As one scholar has put it: “For today’s American Catholics to have forgotten that history is akin to the prophets claim about Israel’s historical amnesia regarding the exodus or exile.”⁴

The Church did not so much “do” for immigrants, as the church of immigrants did for its own in a nation that was often hostile to the faith and the faithful. This generation of Catholics understood St. Francis’s counsel to preach the Gospel constantly, and sometimes even to use words.

We face a similar challenge today. Can we read the stories of migrants dying along the U.S.-Mexico border (more than one a day) and forget the “steerage passengers” of another era crammed into filthy and disease-ridden boats? Can we listen to the anti-immigrant diatribes on television and radio, and forget that well-organized movements in the late 19th and early 20th century portrayed immigrants as a threat to the nation’s security, to law-abiding citizens, and to U.S. workers. Can we forget that Catholics were accused of being un-assimilable due to their faith? Consider this screed from that earlier period:

This large mass of aliens ... very many of them blind followers of an ecclesiastical despotism – a large majority of them without correct ideas of the duties appertaining to citizens of a republican government and by early prejudices totally unfitted to learn them – differing in language, in national customs and feelings, and scattered all over the country, still with tenacity holding on to and serving those customs⁵

This is from William Minor, Governor-elect of Connecticut and member of the “know nothing” party, in his inaugural speech in 1855.

Or what about this quote?:

³Jay P. Dolan, The American Catholic Experience (Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1985), pgs. 135, 160-61, 255.

⁴Rev. Kenneth Himes, OFM, “The Rights of People Regarding Migration: A Perspective from Catholic Social Teaching,” *Who Are My Sisters and Brothers: Reflections on Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees* (United States Catholic Conference 1996), pgs. 12-13.

⁵“Connecticut History on the Web,” available at http://www.connhistory.org/newcomers_reading.htm (last visited, Nov. 1, 2006).

Every true nation is the creation of a unique people, separate from all others. Indeed, if America is an ideological nation grounded no deeper than in the sandy soil of abstract ideas, she will not survive the storms of this century.⁶

This seems to me a fundamental misreading of the American experience. In fact, the United States has always been a nation of immigrants united by a commitment to abstract ideas like freedom, equality, rights and democracy. These ideas form the very bedrock of our nation, hardly its “sandy soil.”

Is this another “know nothing” quote? Actually, it comes from Patrick J. Buchanan’s colorfully titled new book, State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America.

Or what about this warning from an 1885 report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics?:

In the Eastern part of the State of Connecticut, the French Canadians have formed a perplexing element in the labor problems. The Italians are perhaps destined to form a still more perplexing element in other parts of the state.⁷

Are we really “perplexed” by French Canadian or Italian or Mexican or Ecuadorean immigrants? No, because “they” are “us!” We are a church of immigrants in a nation of immigrants, a nation that offers hope to a fractured world precisely because of how it welcomes and incorporates immigrants into its life. Archbishop Mansell makes this point beautifully. “The ability of the world to survive as a family of nations,” he says, “depends on the ability of the United States to thrive as a nation of immigrant families.”

Migration is so central to our Catholic identity that it serves as the Church’s metaphor for itself, for believers, and for our faith.⁸ St. Teresa of Avila said: “This life is like a night spent in an uncomfortable inn.” We are all pilgrims on a spiritual journey. During this journey, we can

⁶Patrick J. Buchanan Official Web-Site, available at http://buchanan.org/blog/?page_id=3 (last visited, Nov. 1, 2006).

⁷Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Connecticut, “Cheap Labor” (Nov. 30, 1885), available at http://www.connhistory.org/newcomers_reading.htm (last visited, Nov. 1, 2006).

⁸Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, No. 16 (2004) (“To follow Christ means to walk behind Him and to be in transit in the world because ‘there is no eternal city for us in this life’ (Heb. 13:14). The believer is always a pároikos, a temporary resident, a guest wherever he may be (cf. 1 Pt. 1:1; 2:11; Jn 17:14-16). This means that for Christians it is not all that important where they live geographically, while a sense for hospitality is natural to them.”)

either move towards or away from each other.⁹

The Church of course, knows that migration can bring tension and conflict. But the Church also knows that migration offers a unique opportunity to build true unity, which is its calling.¹⁰ The last three statements by the U.S. bishops on migration have adopted the theme of gathering together God's scattered children (Jn. 11:52).¹¹ As John Paul II said: "The Church considers the problem of illegal migrants from the standpoint of Christ, who died to gather together the dispersed children of God, to rehabilitate the marginalized and to bring close those who are distant, in order to integrate all within a communion that is not based on ethnic, cultural or social membership ..."¹² In the words of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, "[m]igration brings together the manifold components of the human family and thus leads to the construction of an ever vaster and more varied society, almost a prolongation of that meeting of peoples and ethnic groups that, through the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, became ecclesial fraternity."¹³

The Church also views migration through the lens of "human" or "natural" rights which, of course, do not turn on immigration status. According to the scholar Brian Tierney, the idea of subjective "natural rights" arose from medieval Christian jurisprudence and philosophy. By the 1200s, this tradition had recognized certain rights as both powers and duties, the best example being the "right to self preservation." Because this right entailed a duty, it could not be "alienated" or taken away.¹⁴ The right of self-preservation also applies to migrants fleeing poverty and persecution. You might say that it is alien to our tradition to treat persons –

⁹Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, (Dell Publishing Company, Inc. 1953), p. 50 ("There is only one true flight from the world: it is not an escape from trouble and conflict and disunity and suffering, but the flight from disunity and separation, to unity and peace in the love of other men.")

¹⁰Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, No. 1 (Nov. 21, 1964) ("[T]he Church, in Christ, is a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of "communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race...")

¹¹National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Migration, "One Family Under God" (Dec. 1995); United States Catholic Conference, "Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity" (Nov. 2000); Conferencia Episcopado Mexicano, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope" (Jan. 2003).

¹²Pope John Paul II, "Message for World Migration Day 1995-1996," No. 3 (Jul. 25, 1995)..

¹³Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, No. 12 (2004).

¹⁴Brian Tierney, *The Idea of Natural Rights* (Emory University 1997), pgs. 79, 237.

particularly those exercising their inalienable rights – as “aliens.”

Some 700 years later and just over 40 years ago, Pope John XXIII in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* said: “[Every person] has rights and obligations flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature. And as these rights and obligations are universal and inviolable so they cannot in any way be surrendered.”¹⁵ Among these rights, “when there are just reasons for it” is “the right to emigrate to other countries and take up residence there.”¹⁶ Pope John Paul II urged the Church to be “a vigilant advocate, defending against any unjust restriction on the natural right of individual persons to move freely within their own nation and from one nation to another.”¹⁷

We have another phrase for “social justice.” We call it “contributive justice.” For us, social justice demands that newcomers be allowed to contribute fully to the good of their new country. Pope John Paul II asked: “How can the baptized claim to welcome Christ if they close the door to the foreigner who comes knocking?” If any doubt remains as to our duty to welcome immigrants, Jesus taught that our very salvation depends on it (Mt. 25:35).

Catholic social teaching also sees migration from the perspective of the common good. According to *Pacem in Terris*, “civil authority exists, not to confine its people within the boundaries of their nation, but to protect, above all else, the common good of the entire human family.”¹⁸ This is at the heart of what is meant by our more recent term the “globalization of solidarity.” It means we must recognize our common humanity and our interdependence. We are all in this together and are “all really responsible for all.”¹⁹

The “common good” is a concept that we no longer hear so frequently in U.S. public discourse. One legal scholar defines this term as the “set of conditions which enables the members of a community to attain for themselves reasonable objectives, or to realize reasonably for themselves the value(s), for the sake of which they have reason to collaborate with each other”²⁰ *Pacem in Terris* defines it as “the sum total of those conditions of social living whereby men are enabled to achieve their own integral perfection more fully and more easily.”²¹ In other words, this term speaks to conditions that allow persons to realize their human potential.

¹⁵Pope John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, No. 9 (1963) [hereinafter “*Pacem in Terris*.”]

¹⁶*Pacem in Terris*, No. 25.

¹⁷Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, No. 65 (1999).

¹⁸*Pacem in Terris*, No. 98.

¹⁹Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 38 (Dec. 30, 1987).

²⁰John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Clarendon Press 1980), pg. 155.

²¹*Pacem in Terris*, No. 58.

In Catholic teaching, the conditions that allow all persons to thrive cannot be those that deny rights to certain classes of people. In 1986, the U.S. bishops said: “It is against the common good and unacceptable to have a double society, one visible with rights and one invisible without rights -- a voiceless underground of undocumented persons.”²² In 2003, the U.S. and Mexican bishops taught that “[w]hile the sovereign state may impose reasonable limits on immigration, the common good is not served when the basic human rights of the individual are violated.”²³ In fact, it may be the case that our society’s diminishing concern with the common good relates to its loss of respect for human rights.

Archbishop Romero put it this way: “The common good will not be attained by excluding people. We can’t enrich the common good of our country by driving out those we don’t care for.”²⁴ He also wrote:

By what right have we catalogued persons
as first-class persons or second-class persons?
In the theology of human nature there is only one class:
children of God.

Justice for Immigrants

The Church calls us to identify in an intense way with migrants and newcomers. This begs the question: who are these immigrants and what do they want? They are human beings, our brothers and sisters, created in God’s image. Yet we often fail to recognize them as such. Many U.S. citizens saw the faces of newcomers for the first time in the immigrant rallies this year.

Anti-immigrant ideologues viewed these gatherings as threatening. I saw millions of people peacefully asking for acceptance and a place in this country. They were asking for what the rest of us want in life – the ability to live in security, to support their families, to contribute to their country, and to practice their faith.

Perhaps the best way to explain the Justice for Immigrants’ (“JFI”) campaign is to use the language of the U.S. and Mexican bishops. They said that “[f]aith 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.” The campaign is one of the Church’s “structures of solidarity.”

It is rooted in two basic principles. The first is the need to ameliorate the conditions that force people to migrate. This is why the U.S. bishops link the Justice for Immigrants’ campaign to the

²²National Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Together a New People” (November 1986).

²³*Pacem in Terris*, No. 39.

²⁴Oscar Romero, The Violence of Love (Orbis Books 1988), pg. 3.

Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty which advocates on foreign aid, trade, and debt relief policies. It is why Catholic Relief Services offers development programs in immigrant-source countries that attempt to allow people to stay at home. One CRS program, for example, assists family farmers in Chihuahua, Mexico who have suffered from increased agricultural exports from the United States. Employment in Mexico's agricultural sector declined from 8.1 to 6.8 million between 1993 and 2002, partially as the result of the North American Free Trade Agreement.²⁵ U.S. trade agreements have liberalized the flow of goods, services, and information, but did not ease restrictions on the movement of those people who are inevitably displaced by them. As business and jobs move, so do people. We cannot reasonably encourage the flow of one, but restrict the flow of the other.

Human rights abuses constitute another root cause of migration. We have been taught this lesson by the Central American asylum-seekers of the 1980s, the more than 900,000 refugees that the Catholic Church in the United States has resettled since 1975, and many others.

In our experience, people do not uproot casually. When we ask migrants on U.S.-Mexico border why they risk their lives, they invariably respond that it is better to die trying to cross than to die slowly at home. A Haitian boat person explained to one of our bishops that he had attempted the perilous trip because "a shark's teeth are sweeter than misery." Migrants typically come to live in safety and to support their families. The substantial monies they send home – \$45 billion to Latin America alone last year – embody their sacrifices.²⁶ Nor does it take much in the way of wages or hope to keep them at home. Maquiladoras (assembly plants) on the border in Mexico employ hundreds of thousands of Mexican nationals, paying \$1 an hour. Yet few of these workers leave.

So the first principle of the Justice for Immigration campaign is to address root causes. The second is to integrate immigrants into our nation's life. The United States has 37 million foreign-born persons; 12 million of them are undocumented. Nobody at this point believes that it would be feasible to deport 12 million people.²⁷ In the United States, 6.6 million families (with 14.6 million people) are headed by an undocumented person.²⁸ Overall, the undocumented

²⁵Sandra Polaski, "Jobs, Wages, and Household Income," in NAFTA's Promise and Reality: Lessons from Mexico for the Hemisphere (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2004), pgs. 19-20.

²⁶Krissah Williams, "Immigrants Sending \$45 Billion Home," *Washington Post* (Oct. 19, 2006).

²⁷Rajeev Goyle and David A. Jaegar, Ph.D., "Deporting the Undocumented: A Cost Assessment" (Center for American Progress July 2005), pgs. 1-2 (This study concludes that it would cost \$216 billion over five years to deport all of the nation's undocumented.)

²⁸Jeffrey Passel, "The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migrant Population in the U.S." (Pew Hispanic Center, Mar. 7, 2006).

account for 5 percent of the U.S. workforce, with a significantly higher percentage in many industries.²⁹ Immigrants are responsible for 60 percent of the job growth between 2000 and 2004.³⁰ Any growth in the critical demographic group of 25 to 54 year old workers will have to come from immigrants (and the elderly).³¹ According to Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, the U.S. economy needs 3.5 million immigrants annually to support its aging population.³² Immigrants alone cannot solve this problem, but they represent one part of its solution.

At an exhibit at Ellis Island, an anonymous Italian immigrant is quoted as saying: “I came to America because I heard the streets were paved with gold. When I got here, I found out three things: First, the streets were not paved with gold. Second, they weren’t paved at all. Third, I was expected to pave them.” In a matter of speaking, immigrants are still paving the roads, many of them without status. Why? A major reason is that U.S. law provides only 5,000 unskilled work visas each year, but more than 500,000 undocumented persons are entering yearly, the vast majority of them finding jobs. Ask the pear growers north of San Francisco or the apple growers in New York or Washington state whose fruit is now rotting on their trees after immigration crack-downs if immigrants contribute to the “common good.”³³

Thus, the Justice for Immigrants campaign supports a “comprehensive” approach to immigration reform that would combine enforcement with:

- increases in employment- and family-based immigration.
- a path to legal status for two deserving groups, agricultural laborers and undocumented children raised in the United States.
- a program to allow certain undocumented persons to “earn” legal status through their labor, good character, and payment of a fine.

How can the Archdiocese of Hartford contribute to this campaign? First, we need you to advocate for positive immigration reform under the Justice for Immigrants banner. This will require public education, starting with Catholics who may not understand or embrace Church

²⁹*Id.*

³⁰Migration Policy Institute, “Immigration and America’s Future: A New Chapter” (2006), pgs. 3-5.

³¹*Id.*

³²*Reuters*, “Bernanke: Immigration won’t solve aging problem” (Oct. 4, 2006).

³³Julia Preston, “Pickers Are Few, and Growers Blame Congress,” *New York Times* (Sept. 22, 2006).

teaching in this area. Please visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org. Second, we need you to build an infrastructure to serve immigrants in preparation for immigration reform. Needless to say, a program serving 12 million persons nationally will require a total mobilization of Church resources. CLINIC has created a division and a special web page (www.cliniclegal.org) devoted to this task. Given current political realities, you might call the Justice for Immigrants' campaign a fool's errand. If so, we can count ourselves in good company. Dorothy Day spoke of the need to be "fools for Christ." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached that we need to be "creatively maladjusted." They meant that we need to be hopeful and to work to change current realities.

Vision of Immigration Restrictionists

What do the immigration restrictionists want? Many support a strategy to make life so difficult for the undocumented and certain other immigrants that they will opt to leave. Last year, they supported a House-passed bill that would have made it a felony *to be* in undocumented status and *to assist* the undocumented. You cannot "be" illegal; you can behave illegally. And it is a Gospel imperative to serve the needy.

They also support state and local laws that would make it impossible for immigrants to work, to secure housing, to access health care, to get drivers' licenses, to open bank accounts, and otherwise to do what they need to do to live. These measures will not force immigrants to leave the country. They will instead lead to the creation of a large class of second-class non-citizens without rights, security or prospects. Is this what we want?

Immigration restrictionists also supported legislation to build a 700-mile fence on the U.S.-Mexico border. This legislation – the only on immigration likely to pass Congress this year – cannot possibly work and, thus, might best be seen as a symbolic protest of the worst kind.

How do restrictionists argue for these policy positions? They say: "We need an immigration system that honors 'the rule of law.'" We agree. In a democracy, laws are per se legitimate and merit respect. This is a characteristic of our nation that attracts immigrants. The United States is not a dictatorship or an oligarchy or a kleptocracy, but a country governed by laws.

However, the "rule of law" cannot be conflated with the term "law and order." It does not refer to the full enforcement of every law on the books or the creation of more unenforceable laws. It speaks primarily to the need to curb abuses of government power and to make the leaders accountable to the laws. A recent Brookings Institute paper described the "institutional attributes" of a system that honored the rule of law. Under such a system, the laws would be prospective, coherent with other laws, stable enough to be followed, produce predictable outcomes, and be consistently administered.³⁴ This does not describe the immigration system

³⁴Rachel Kleinfeld Belton, "Competing Definitions of the Rule of Law," Carnegie Papers, Rule of Law Series, No. 55 (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Jan. 2005), pgs. 5-6.

we have. In our system, there are stark difference between the written law and the living law. Our immigration rules are arbitrary, constantly changing, inconsistently administered, and (often) retroactive. Our system also pits legal requirements against family duties, making compliance nearly impossible and certainly cruel in many cases.

We would look at the totality of an immigrant's situation. For us, the fact that a person has violated our immigration laws triggers key questions. Why did he or she come? Were they exercising their God-given right (and duty) to support themselves and their families? Did they have "access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life" at home?³⁵ Were they fleeing danger or persecution? These considerations matter to us. We also ask what individual immigrants have been doing in the United States. Have they been contributing to the good of our nation with their labor, their faith, their commitment to family, and to their community? We weigh the seriousness of the immigration violation against the punishment. Was the offense like a murder or a breaking and entering, or more like the crime of the hungry person who takes food for his family or the homeless person who sleeps in a park? Is banishment – from family and from means of support – a proportional punishment? Or can the immigrant atone in some other way?

Restrictionists argue that immigration threatens our nation's security. In many ways, immigration strengthens our security and, of course, immigrants cannot be conflated with terrorists. However, it is true that terrorists exploited our immigration system. We need a system that can intercept those who present a risk and run identity and security checks on those seeking to enter. How to create such a system? The best way – and really the only feasible way – is to expand the legal avenues for admission and to offer those here a way to earn legal status. Here is how one security expert, Stephen Flynn, puts it:

If we legalize those who are here and are coming for valid purposes, we can concentrate law enforcement resources on the few bad actors. As it stands, it is not the rule-breakers who create the security risk; instead it is unenforceable laws. Our current system creates larger shadows for would-be terrorists to hide in. We need to 'drain the swamp from the fish.'³⁶

Furthermore, our immigration system should not attempt to further its security goals at the expense of human rights. As Archbishop Celestino Migliore, the Vatican's ambassador to the United Nations, recently said:

³⁵Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 26.

³⁶Donald Kerwin and Col. Margaret Stock, "National Security and Immigration Policy: Reclaiming Terms, Measuring Success, and Setting Priorities" (U.S. Military Academy, Combating Terrorism Center, June 2006), available at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/research.asp>.

[E]ffective counterterrorism measures and the protection of human rights are not conflicting goals. Indeed, the former must serve the latter, because the protection of human rights is the primary objective of any counter-terrorism strategy. The absolute unacceptability of terrorism lies precisely in the fact that it uses innocent people as a means to obtain its ends, thus showing contempt and utter disregard for human life and dignity.³⁷

Immigration restrictionists argue that the United States first needs to control its borders and only then should it consider liberalizing its standards for legal status and admission. Again, the Church supports the right of the nation to control its borders. However, our experience teaches that an “enforcement only” approach will not work. We believe this because our nation has tried it. Between 1993 and 2006, Border Patrol funding more than quadrupled, from \$362 million to \$1.8 billion.³⁸ During the same period, the undocumented population has at least tripled, with no end in sight.³⁹ We need comprehensive reform, not a 700 mile wall.

Our opponents also aver that an earned legalization program would be unfair to those who have played by the rules and waited patiently in line for a visa. Yet millions of undocumented immigrants have been approved for family- or employment-based visas, and face multi-year delays based on caps by country and by visa category. Our laws put these immigrants in the untenable position of remaining with their families in the U.S. in unlawful status, or living abroad away from their families for years. These people are not jumping ahead of the line; they are the line.

Faith, Hope and Charity

Let me end with two stories, one on charity and the other on hope.

First charity. A man in downtown Hartford – in town for an anti-immigrant rally – is robbed, beaten, and left incapacitated in the gutter. He badly needs help, but various people pass him, including I’m sad to say a Catholic priest. After a while, the man sees a dark-complected man approaching (an immigrant, he fears). He is wearing a baseball cap and work clothes. It surprises the injured man when the passerby stops, kneels next to him, props him up, dials 911 on his cell phone, and asks for help in halting English. As the ambulance approaches, the man

³⁷Statement of H.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, Intervention Of The Holy See At The Sixth Commission Of The General Assembly Of The United Nations On Measures To Eliminate International Terrorism (Oct. 16, 2006).

³⁸The U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, “Highlights of the FY06 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations” (Sept. 29, 2005); Department of Homeland Security, “Border Patrol Budget: 1993-2004” (on file with author).

³⁹Jeffrey Passel, “The Size and Characteristics of the Unauthorized Migration Population in the U.S.” (Pew Hispanic Center, Mar. 7, 2006).

disappears into the night, perhaps afraid to be interviewed by the authorities. Is the story familiar? Yes, it is a modern version of the story of the Good Samaritan, the despised foreigner who represents to us the very paradigm of Christian charity. The parable reminds us that we need to question our own assumptions and stereotypes. It also reminds us that welcoming the stranger is not just about giving, but it is also about being open to the way that newcomers might edify, inspire, and renew us. We need to offer newcomers our richness and our poverty.

Finally a story about hope. A man could not support his family in his native land and left for the United States. After a difficult journey, he took a job doing back-breaking labor. At times it may have occurred to him that he might never be able to save enough to support his family and to bring them to join him. But it probably never occurred to him that it was not worth the attempt. So far, this could be the story of millions of hard-working, self-sacrificing immigrants. But it is actually the story of James Moriarty, an Irish immigrant who worked laying railroad track in the late 19th century during our nation's last great era of immigration. One of the children that James ultimately brought to the United States was named P.J. Moriarty. P.J. married Maria O'Callahan, another Irish immigrant. The couple named their second child Matthew.

Like so many children of immigrants, Matthew was hard-working and industrious. As a youth, he distributed two Hartford newspapers in his hometown in Manchester, Connecticut, and worked as a timekeeper and accountant at the Cheney silk mill. In 1921, Pratt Institute in Brooklyn admitted him as an engineering student. He supported himself there by working as a waiter, living and working in a bakery, and cashing in the gold watches he earned as an amateur boxer. After graduating, he moved to Wisconsin to continue his studies and to take a job as an engineer for the Allis-Chalmers company. In 1928, he moved back east to work as an engineer in the tunnel division of the New York subway system. By 1932, he had returned to Manchester to marry a woman from Bolton, Connecticut, Julia Sheridan. In 1933, Matthew and his brother started a business, a gas station called Moriarty Brothers. Maybe some of you remember it. Maybe you also guessed that Matthew and Julia were my grandparents. They revered the Catholic Church, lived for their family, and worked hard at their lives. But maybe you know this as well because it was true of your own parents and grandparents.

We would not be together tonight if not for them – your ancestors and mine – who built this Church and nation. May we honor all of them – this great communion of saints – through our solidarity with today's newcomers. Thank you.