

Immigration Reform: Your Lenten Promise

Justice for Immigrants Toolkit



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"We are one family under God"

Download this toolkit at justiceforimmigrants.org.

Immigration Reform: Your Lenten Promise Justice for Immigrants Toolkit

Copyright © January 2015
Justice for Immigrants
All rights reserved.

Contributors:

Judy Coode, Maryknoll Center for Global Concerns
Tony Cube, Migration and Refugee Services/USCCB
Michelle Fordice, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Tessa McKenzie, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Brian McLaughlin, Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Maura Moser, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Ryan Murphy, Sisters of Mercy
Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN, Pax Christi USA
Todd Scribner, Migration and Refugee Services/USCCB
Russ Testa, Holy Name Province
Ashley Wilson, NETWORK
Scott Wright, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the New American Bible, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Table of Contents

Lenten Commitment for Reform.....	4
About Justice for Immigrants	5
Weekly Devotions	
Ash Wednesday February 18	
Consider Committing to Immigration Reform for Lent	6
Week 1 February 22-28	
Comprehensive Immigration Reform and Executive Action	10
Week 2 March 1-7	
Root Causes	13
Week 3 March 8-14	
Root Causes of Forced Migration	15
Week 4 March 15-21	
Immigrant Detention.....	19
Week 5 March 22-April 28	
Unaccompanied Minors and Family Migration.....	23
Holy Week March 29-April 4	
Repentance and Hope.....	27
Easter April 5	
An Easter Reflection.....	29
Promotional Resources	30

Lenten Commitment for Reform

For Just and Humane Immigration Reform

This Lent, the Justice for Immigrants Campaign invites you to pray, fast, learn, give and advocate for just and humane immigration reform, in solidarity with immigrants and refugees by committing to one or more of the following activities. We ask you to make the following commitments:

- **Pray** daily for the protection of immigrants and their families, for the boldness of the faith community to advocate for promote human dignity, and for our elected leaders to enact legislation that provides a pathway to legal status for undocumented immigrants and that reunifies families.
- **Fast** in solidarity with those who hunger and migrate from their homeland to seek opportunities to provide for themselves and their families.
- **Learn** from your friends, neighbors and fellow parishioners each week to better understand individual views, broader societal concerns and to help your community move forward in support of the Justice for Immigrants Campaign.
- **Give** your time to help organize at least one bridge-building event between immigrants and non immigrants to share stories, build new relationships, celebrate differences and improve unity among participants.
- **Advocate** for just and humane immigration reform by going to justiceforimmigrants.org once a week and sending an electronic postcard in support of immigration reform to members of Congress. Encourage your friends, family and neighbors to go to the website and send postcards each week as well.

In each unit of this guide you will find suggestions on how you can do something that week to promote generosity toward newcomers. Show support for pro-immigrant legislative and administrative reforms embraced by the bishops, educate your neighbors, and reach out to Catholic communities assisting immigrants in your diocese—take action!

About Justice for Immigrants

The **Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope** campaign was developed to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic institutions, individuals, and other persons of good faith in support of comprehensive immigration reform. Its goal is to maximize the Church's influence on this issue, consistent with the immigration reform principles enunciated in the bishops' pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: A Journey of Hope*.

The Campaign's primary objectives are:

- To educate the public, especially the Catholic community, including Catholic public officials, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants;
- To create political will for positive immigration reform;
- To enact legislative and administrative reforms based on the principles articulated by the bishops; and
- To organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of the reforms.

Participating National Organizations include:

- Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty
- Catholic Campaign for Human Development
- Catholic Charities USA
- Catholic Health Association
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
- Catholic Relief Services
- Columban Fathers
- Conference of Major Superiors of Men
- Franciscan Action Network
- Glenmary Home Missioners
- Hispanic Affairs - USCCB
- Irish Apostolate USA
- Jesuit Conference
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- Justice, Peace and Human Development - USCCB
- Leadership Conference of Women Religious
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
- Migration and Refugee Services - USCCB
- National Catholic Association of Diocesan Directors of Hispanic Ministries
- National Catholic Educational Association
- National Council of Catholic Women
- Network
- Pax Christi USA
- The Roundtable
- Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Ash Wednesday: February 18

Consider Committing to Immigration Reform for Lent

Matthew 2:13-23

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

“A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be consoled,
since they were no more.”

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He shall be called a Nazorean.”

The US Bishops and Migration

The US bishops have taken the Gospel teachings and the teachings of the Popes and applied it to the immigration reality in the United States. In January 2003, the US bishops issued the pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. In that document, the US bishops articulated the following five principles that govern how the Church responds to public policy proposals relating to immigration.

-
1. **Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.** This principle states that a person has a right not to migrate. In other words, economic, social, and political conditions in their homeland should provide an opportunity for a person to work and support his or her family in dignity and safety. In public policy terms, efforts should be made to address global economic inequities through just trade practices, economic development, and debt relief. Peacemaking efforts should be advanced to end conflict which forces persons to flee their homes.
 2. **Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.** When persons are unable to find work and support themselves and their families, they have a right to migrate to other countries and work. This right is not absolute, as stated by Pope John XXIII, when he said this right to emigrate applies when “there are just reasons for it.” In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty is rampant and political unrest has resulted in wars and persecution, migrants who are forced to leave their homes out of necessity and seek only to survive and support their families must be given special consideration.
 3. **Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders.** The Church recognizes the right of the sovereign to protect and control its borders in the service of the common good of its citizens. However, this is not an absolute right. Nations also have an obligation to the universal common good, as articulated by Pope John XXIII in *Pacem in Terris*, and thus should seek to accommodate migration to the greatest extent possible. Powerful economic nations, such as the United States, have a higher obligation to serve the universal common good, according to Catholic social teachings. In the current global economic environment, in which labor demands in the United States attract foreign laborers, the United States should establish an immigration system that provides legal avenues for persons to enter the nation legally in a safe, orderly, and dignified manner to obtain jobs and reunite with family members.
 4. **Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.** Persons who flee their home countries because they fear persecution should be afforded safe haven and protection in another country. Conflict and political unrest in many parts of the world force persons to leave their homes for fear of death or harm. The United States should employ a refugee and asylum system that protects asylum seekers, refugees, and other forced migrants and offers them a haven from persecution.
 5. **The human rights and the human dignity of undocumented migrants should be respected.** Persons who enter a nation without proper authorization or who over-stay their visas should be treated with respect and dignity. They should not be detained in deplorable conditions for lengthy periods of time, shack-led by their feet and hands, or abused in any manner. They should be afforded due process of the law and, if applicable, allowed to articulate a fear of return to their home before a qualified adjudicator. They should not be blamed for the social ills of a nation.

Prayer

St. Juan Diego, our first saint from the Americas, pray for us.

We ask God the Father to pour forth the protecting love of his Spirit upon all migrants, taking special heed of those in need of support, who are isolated or separated from their native lands, whether by choice or necessity.

St. Juan Diego, intercede for those torn away from their families in pursuit of work that they may be reunited: husbands with wives and parents with children.

As the Virgin of Guadalupe promised you her compassionate prayers for the poor of Mexico, so now raise your merciful pleading for migrant women and children who are particularly vulnerable to the dangers of human trafficking.

Seek for them protection from all evil.

May we, O Blessed Juan Diego, receive through your prayers, the grace to welcome with love to our country all migrants who seek a home in our parishes and communities.

And we ask that you join your prayers to those of Our Lady, who appeared to you as your Mother and as Mother of all in our land.

May she wrap her mantle of protection around all migrant people.

We beg for her love, compassion, help, and protection on all immigrants who today experience great sufferings, sorrows, necessities, and misfortunes.

In the shared power of Christ and the union of the Holy Spirit, we say: Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. How can we understand the experience of the Holy Family in light of contemporary migration flows? How should this experience inform how we engage issues related to migration?
2. How should the five principles developed in the pastoral document *Strangers No Longer Together: on the Journey of Hope* inform policymaking on the issue of migration? How can we understand these principles as currently playing out (or not playing out) in the contemporary debate related to comprehensive immigration reform?

Take Action

Ash Wednesday 2015 (February 18) is during a Congressional recess, a break in the legislative calendar when federal lawmakers are in their states and districts meeting with their constituents. We are fortunate that the legislative recess coincides with the start of Lent. Prior to the recess week of February 16-20, call your US Senators' and Representatives' state or district offices and request a meeting with your lawmaker during that week they are away from Washington, DC. Ask to meet with your Members' staffers if you are unable to get a meeting personally with your lawmaker.

In your meetings, ask your Senators, Member of Congress or their staff to support compassionate immigration reform legislation and oppose funding measures, bills and amendments that repeal protection from deportation for millions of immigrants and their families.



Bishop of Tucson Gerald Kicanas serves communion along the international border wall in Nogales, Ariz.

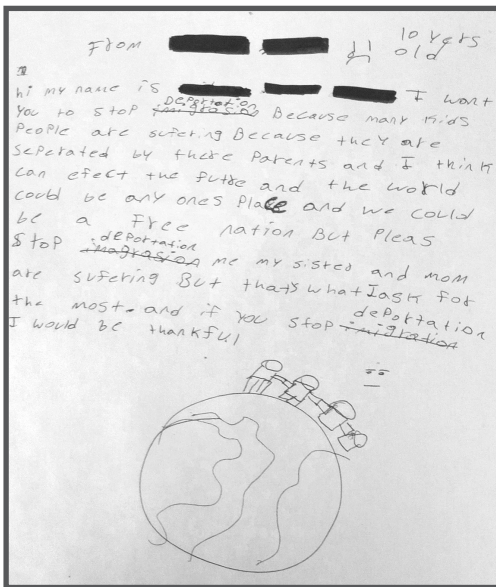
Week 1: February 22-28

Comprehensive Immigration Reform and Executive Action

Deuteronomy 10:19

So you too should love the resident alien, for that is what you were in the land of Egypt.

Jose's Story



George, age 10, writes an open letter asking for his family to stay.

On August 29, 2013, Jose was arrested at his home in front of his wife Rachel and their two US citizen children, George and Maria. Since coming to the United States in 2001, Jose worked hard to provide for his family and had no interactions with law enforcement. Unfortunately, Jose's story is not unique. According to the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), 72,410 parents of US-citizen children were deported in 2013. Many of them had committed no crimes or were charged with low-level, immigration-related offenses.

Devastated by Jose's arrest, that night his family sought counsel by attending a community panel on immigration reform. Jose's 10-year old son George, worked up the courage to approach the microphone to humbly ask the panel of experts, "What can we do to stop deportation?" While this child should have been concerned about sports or cartoons like other kids his

age, he sought consultation of what he could do to keep his dad in the United States. Meanwhile, the audience could see tears streaming down Rachel's cheeks, proud of her son's fortitude but in complete despair over the loss of her spouse. The panel, unable to give George the answer he needed to save his father, reminded the audience the importance of advocacy.

George then inspired the crowd to join him as he wrote a letter to Congress and President Obama. In his letter, George shared, "kids are suffering because they are separated by their parents...if you stop deportation, I would be thankful." Sadly, despite George's valiant efforts, in October 2014, a month prior to President Obama's executive action on immigration, Jose was deported.

As the primary breadwinner, Jose's family depended on his salary. Without his income, after the cost of food and rent, Rachel can no longer afford the medication she needs for a chronic illness. Statistically, the deportation of the primary wage earner drops a family's median income from \$36,000 to \$15,400 a year, well below the federal poverty line.

Needless to say, mass deportations harm more than the person removed from the country. As in the case of Jose and his family, deportation inflicts emotional, physical, financial and spiritual suffering on the people left behind.

*To protect the identity of the people in this story, the names have been changed.

Summary of President Obama's Executive Action on Immigration

Due to the inability of Congress to pass any comprehensive immigration reform, President Barack Obama announced on November 20, 2014, that through the Deferred Action for Parental Accountability (DAPA) program, the US will not deport certain undocumented parents of US citizens and parents of lawful permanent residents. The president also announced an expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program for youth who came to the United States as children. These parents and youth may be granted a type of temporary permission to stay in the US called "deferred action." These programs are expected to help up to 4.4 million people. While program regulations are being written, Republicans in the House of Representatives passed a bill that would strip funding from the implementation of this program. If implemented, however, President Obama's executive order or administrative relief would keep families together, enable people to come out from the shadows, improve our security as we would "know" who is living in our borders, and improve worker rights and salaries.

Position of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops

On December 10, 2014, the Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo, Chairman of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration, made the following statement to the Senate Judiciary Committee:

Although short of what is necessary to fully reform our nation's broken immigration system, the Administration's recently announced executive actions on immigration represent a first step in the process of fixing it. Importantly, it would prevent the separation of families, ensuring that US citizens and permanent residents are not faced with losing their parents or being forced to return with them to a country in which they have never lived. Instead of traumatizing these children and young adults—the future leaders of our country—we should invest in them by ensuring that their families remain intact.

Rather than attempting to rescind the Administration's recent executive actions on immigration, Congress should act on a comprehensive and permanent solution to our immigration challenges by passing comprehensive immigration reform legislation that addresses all aspects of our immigration system. Enactment of such a measure would supersede the recent executive actions.

I strongly urge Congress and the President to work together to enact permanent reforms to our nation's immigration system for the best interests of the nation and the migrants who seek refuge here. We will continue to work with both parties in the 114th Congress to enact legislation that welcomes and protects immigrants and promotes a just and fair immigration policy.

A Prayer: For Our Migrant Brothers and Sisters

Excerpt taken from Pope Francis' message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees: "A Church without Frontiers, Mother to All."

Dear migrants and refugees, you have a special place in the heart of the Church, and you help her to enlarge her heart and to manifest her motherhood towards the entire human family. Do not lose your faith and hope! Let us think of the Holy Family during the flight in Egypt: Just as the maternal heart of the Blessed Virgin and the kind heart of Saint Joseph kept alive the confidence that God would never abandon them, so in you may the same hope in the Lord never be wanting. We entrust you to their protection and we pray with Pope Francis for your safety and well-being.

Reflection Questions

1. Pause for a few minute to reflect on the scripture (Deuteronomy 10:19) with the following questions: What is your family's immigration story and how does it relate to today's immigrants? How would you feel knowing that you might not see your family members for many years? How would you like to be treated by neighbors in your community, your employer, new acquaintances?
2. Then take a few more minutes to reflect on the following questions in light of Jose's story: How would you feel if a member of your immediate family was suddenly taken away? Would you have the means to pay your bills? Who in your community would you look to for help?
3. Now, what can you do differently to welcome immigrants and refugees in your church, your school, your community? How can you be an active participant in the Gospel mandate to "welcome the stranger?"

Call to Action

This week, the Justice for Immigrants campaign is having a call-in day to Congress to inform our legislators that we support President Obama's Executive Action. When you call, write, or meet your legislators, you are helping to hold them accountable in their responsibility to act for the common good. With your help, we can take measures to ensure that the Senate will reject this anti-immigrant legislation.

Number: Toll free number is 1-855-589-5698

Message: Please vote for government funding bills that do not contain provisions to undo Executive Actions to protect immigrants, and pass comprehensive immigration reform.

Week 2: March 1-7

Root Causes: Push Factors

Matthew 2: 13-14

[T]he angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

Root causes: Violence and Poverty

In the 2003 US bishops’ pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, they articulate five principles that highlight the Church’s response to public policy toward migrants. Among those principles, one specifically states that refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection:

Persons who flee their home countries because they fear persecution should be afforded safe haven and protection in another country. Conflict and political unrest in many parts of the world force persons to leave their homes for fear of death or harm. The United States should employ a refugee and asylum system that protects asylum seekers, refugees, and other forced migrants and offers them a haven from persecution.

In many cases, especially those concerning unaccompanied minors and women from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, people are forced to leave their home countries as a result of violence and poverty. According to the Center for American Progress, “San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, and Juticalpa in Honduras and San Salvador in El Salvador were the major cities and towns where the children were from. Not surprisingly, these four cities are among the poorest and most violent in the region. San Pedro Sula, for instance, with a rate of 187 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2013, has the highest murder rate of any city in the world and sent 2,000 children to the United States in the first five months of 2014.” With these statistics in mind, it is understandable why someone would send their children away for a better, safer life.

A Prayer: Immigration reform from the Heart of God

From the Interfaith Immigration Coalition FastAction Campaign

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 we 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.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I keep myself educated on the root causes of migration? Why do so many people flee their homelands for a better life?
2. What is my parish doing to address the needs of refugees and asylum seekers? What can I do to help my parish do more for refugee children in need?

Take Action

Learn more about unaccompanied migrant children.

- USCCB Toolkit on Unaccompanied Minors:
uscbb.org/about/migration-policy/unaccompanied-migrant-children-resource-kit.cfm
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. Toolkit on Unaccompanied Minors:
cliniclegal.org/resources/unaccompanied-migrant-children-toolkit

Week 3: March 8-14

Root Causes: Pull Factors

Exodus 20: 1-17

Then God spoke all these words:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall not have other gods beside me. You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth; you shall not bow down before them or serve them. For I, the LORD, your God, am a jealous God, inflicting punishment for their ancestors' wickedness on the children of those who hate me, down to the third and fourth generation; but showing love down to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not invoke the name of the LORD, your God, in vain. For the LORD will not leave unpunished anyone who invokes his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God. You shall not do any work, either you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your work animal, or the resident alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD has blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not kill. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Rights and Responsibilities in our Catholic Understanding of Law

In the readings for the third week of Lent we hear the story of the reception of the Ten Commandments. Many think of the Ten Commandments as a foundation for law. Laws are a way for humans to understand their responsibility to God and to one another. One of our fundamental responsibilities is to care for family. Saint Pope John XXIII made this point in *Pacem et Terris* reminding us that the reason why people have a right to fair wages and work is so that they can fulfill this responsibility to care for their families. In this way, when people find themselves with limited employment or opportunities and are compelled to migrate, they are confronted with the choice between “breaking an immigration law” or “breaking a law from God” to care for one's family.

In 2003, the US Bishops wrote, “The Church [has] recognized that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When a person cannot find work in his/her own country of origin, s/he has the right to travel to another country to find employment.” In taking this action, people are seeking to fulfill their responsibility to care for themselves and their families.

Unfortunately many of the economic structures that humans have constructed and participated in over the centuries have made caring for one's family in one's country of origin impossible in certain instances. For example, a recent Pew Research study found that the median income for unauthorized immigrant families in the United States to be \$36,600. Even though this number was below the US median family income of \$50,000, it was still nearly three times Mexico's median income of \$12,850; notably, Mexico is the wealthiest of the Central American nations. When men and women see their children and extended families suffering, they feel a "pull" to seek higher wages and opportunities to support their families. In US history we witnessed these same "pull" factors when children left farms for cities, and when our ancestors left their home nations for a better chance in the US. During the pre-recession years prior to 2008, when there was a high level of construction and other semi- and low skilled labor growth, there was additional demand for labor that added to the pull of immigrants from outside of the US. As the US economy seems to be growing again, this will also drive the demand for labor, and thus immigrants to fill some of them.

People who have been pulled to the US to find work often establish themselves and continue to send money back home. Over time many experience a profound loneliness and isolation from living apart from their families. This creates a second pull factor to bring the remaining family members to the US in order to keep the family intact. Family unification is one of the major foci of the US Bishop's immigration advocacy effort; it is grounded in the belief that the presence of unified families improves the overall society.

A Prayer: For Families

Excerpted from 2010 National Migration Week Resources

Good and gracious God,
we thank you for the gift of families.
We are grateful for all of the joy and love
that they bring into our lives,
and we ask that you provide
special protection for all families,
particularly those who face hardships
as they move in search of a better life.
Show mercy to those who travel in danger,
and lead them to a place of safety and peace.
Comfort those who are alone and afraid because
their families have been torn apart by violence and injustice.
Open our hearts so that we may provide hospitality
for all who come in search of refuge.
Give us the courage to welcome every stranger
as Christ in our midst.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God forever and ever. Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. What would you do if you felt the best option to care for your family was to live thousands of miles away from them? Can you imagine such a scenario?
2. Have you or any of your immediate family members moved a distance from your place of birth? What were the factors that lead to your or their movement?

Take Action

Make sure your parish is ready to help unauthorized immigrants take advantage of President Obama's Executive Action that is expected to start in mid-May of 2015. Through this action, immigrants will be more secure in their status and be able to attain higher wages to support their families. This will reduce the gap between the "haves and have not" in the US' multi-tier economy.

To find out what you can do to help, contact your local Catholic Charities Office, or find a Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) affiliate near you at cliniclegal.org/affiliates/directory.

Week 4: March 15-21

Immigrant Detention

Leviticus 24:22

You shall have but one rule, for alien and native-born alike. I, the LORD, am your God.

Daniela's Story

8/28/2014

President Obama,

My name is [REDACTED]. I am 11 years old and I was born in Honduras in [REDACTED]. I grew up in [REDACTED] with my family. My mom and I are detained in Artesia, New Mexico. We have almost two months here in this detention center. We entered on July 10, 2014. Before I came here I weighed 75 lbs - now I weigh 59 or 60 lbs. I don't like being here because we don't eat well and I can't do what I did in Honduras so I need to go back or get in school. I am a very intelligent girl. I can speak English and I am learning French and I believe that all the kids who are here in this center should leave. No one wants to be here or we are getting sick mentally. The jail is affecting us. We are not eating anything. Some officials are very rude. President Obama I am asking you to please help us leave here and stay in this country. While I have been here I've been sick two times. I ask you from my heart for your help.

Sincerely: [REDACTED]

I, Allegra Gore, do hereby certify that I am fluent in both Spanish & English and that this translation of the above letter is true and accurate to the best of my abilities. Allegra Gore

Background on Family Detention

The US immigrant detention system grew more than five-fold between 1994 and 2013.

In 1994 the daily detained population on a given day was 6,785 people. By 2013, that number grew to 34,260 – a figure mandated by Congress.

More people pass through the US immigrant detention system each year than through the federal Bureau of Prisons facilities. Yet, none receive court-appointed counsel as criminal defendants are entitled to. Many people are subject to mandatory detention, including asylum seekers and people with US families and other strong and longstanding ties to the United States. By law these people may not be released from detention until their cases are resolved, a period that may range from weeks to years.

In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security discontinued the detention of immigrant families at the privately owned T. Don Hutto Residential Facility, after scathing human rights reports and law suits. However, in response to the dramatic increase of mothers and children fleeing Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala in FY 2014, the Obama administration opened new family detention facilities for a combined capacity of more than 3,000 beds.

The average detention bed costs \$199 per day, and the immigration detention system costs taxpayers \$2 billion each year. By way of comparison, the average daily cost for Alternative to Detention (ATD) programs in 2013 ranged from \$5- \$40 for the variety of available ATD programs. Well-managed ATD programs have proven effective in ensuring high appearance rates at far less cost than detention.

Detaining mothers and young children in prison-like facilities is not only extremely costly, it is also inconsistent with international human rights law and general child welfare principles. Family detention is harmful to the physical and mental health of these families, as children are often depressed and in a weak physical condition due to emotional stress. Mothers, already traumatized by violence, including sexual assault, on their journey remain traumatized, isolated and confused by the restrictive detention setting and the inability to access family or other emotional support. Family detention punishes the most vulnerable who need humanitarian assistance.

A Prayer

Quoted from Pope Francis homily on the Island of Lampedusa: "The Globalization of Indifference"

O Lord, in this Liturgy, a Liturgy of repentance,
We ask forgiveness for the indifference
Towards so many brothers and sisters,
We ask forgiveness for those who are pleased with themselves,
Who are closed in on their own well-being
In a way that leads to the anesthesia of the heart,
We ask you, Father, for forgiveness
For those who with their decisions at the global level have created situations that lead to these tragedies.
Forgive us, Lord!
O Lord, even today let us hear your questions:
"Adam, where are you?"
"Where is the blood of your brother?"
Amen.

Reflection Questions

1. Pope Francis has said we are all responsible for a globalization of indifference. In broad terms, how does that apply to immigration reform?

Take Action

- Learn About Private Prisons:

Report: “For-Profit Family Detention: Meet the Private Prison Corporations Making Millions by Locking Up Refugee Families” October 2014

grassrootsleadership.org/reports/profit-family-detention-meet-private-prison-corporations-making-millions-locking-refugee

Film: The Least of These: Family Detention in America

theleastofthese-film.com/

- Read the USCCB’s recommendations for changes to family detention system and Catholic social teaching on immigration detention:
justiceforimmigrants.org/Family-Detention-Resources.htm
- Sign the JFI postcard to the President, your Senators, and members of Congress to end family detention:
capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/issues/alert/?alertid=63454631&type=PR
- Attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days. Join more than 1,000 Christian advocates on April 17-20, 2015 at the 13th Annual National Gathering of Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice in Washington, DC. The theme for this year is “Breaking the Chains: Mass Incarceration and Systems of Exploitation.” Register at:
advocacydays.org/2015-breaking-the-chains/
- Learn more about the detention of immigrants. The USCCB’s Committee on Migration is releasing a report on detention of immigrants in the United States. The soon to be released report, *Unlocking Human Dignity: A Plan to Transform the US Immigrant Detention System*, will include accounts of visits and tours of immigrant detention facilities, and recommendations for changing the nation’s immigrant detention policies and procedures.

Week 5: March 22-28

Unaccompanied Minors and Family Migration

Matthew 18:1-5

At that time the disciples approached Jesus and said, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, “Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.”

“Nothing is as Important to the Church as Human Life”



There is a refugee crisis on the US-Mexico border. Children as young as two and sometimes their families are making a perilous journey north, fleeing violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala and seeking to reunite with their families in the United States. The numbers approached 60,000 last year, and even more people are expected to seek refuge in the year to come. They are fleeing from the countries with the highest murder rates in the world.

Undocumented immigrant children have become the new scapegoats. Catholic parishes, religious communities, CLINIC, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and individual families have been among the first responders offering these families and children shelter, and advocating for comprehensive immigration reform. Columban Missionaries in El Paso, Texas, for example, provided hospitality for thirty-five women and children last summer, visited minors in detention, and accompanied them across the country to reunite with their loved ones.

Now we are called to take a stronger stand on immigration, and those who are pleading are the women and children fleeing the furnace of violence in their home countries and crossing the border to find safety.

There are many reasons for this crisis, and they have political and economic roots going back decades and generations: support for military governments, free trade agreements that undercut local farmers leading to more poverty and increased migration, a military coup in Honduras, and the violence of corrupt police, drug cartels and youth gangs.

Every day an immigrant dies in the Arizona desert, and 1,100 immigrants are deported. Every day 34,000 immigrants are detained to fill a bed quota, many in for-profit prisons, awaiting deportation. Every year, for the past several years, as many as 400,000 immigrants are deported.

Our message, as people of faith, must be unequivocal: do not deport the children. Protect them, offer them temporary protective or refugee status, and protect their families. Address the roots of the crisis in Central America and failed US policies on immigration. Press Congress to pass comprehensive immigration reform. But don't blame the children.

Thirty-five years ago, the martyred archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero, in the midst of a difficult and bloody civil war, reminded us that something more is at stake here than politics:



Nothing is as important to the church as human life, as the human person, above all, the person of the poor and the oppressed. Besides being human beings, they are also divine beings, since Jesus said that whatever is done to them he takes as done to him. That bloodshed, those deaths, are beyond all politics. They touch the very heart of God.

Fact Sheet: US Department of Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Refugee Resettlement, Unaccompanied Alien Children Program. (acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/fact_sheet.pdf)

A Prayer: For Migrants and Refugees

Text by Marcia Timmel, Adapted from the World Refugee Day Message of Pope Benedict XVI, June 20, 2006. Copyright 2006 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved.

Mary, Most Holy, you, together with St. Joseph and the Child Jesus, experienced the suffering of exile. You were forced to flee to Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod. Today we entrust the men, women and children who live as migrants and refugees to your maternal protection.

Grant us the grace to welcome them with Christian hospitality, so that these brothers and sisters of ours may find acceptance and understanding on their journey.

Teach us to recognize your Son

In the migrant who labors to bring food to our tables

In the refugee seeking protection from persecution, war, and famine

In the woman and child who are victims of human trafficking

In the asylum seeker imprisoned for fleeing without documents

May all of those who are far from their place of birth find in the Church a home where no one is a stranger.

We ask this in the name of your blessed Son, Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

Reflection Questions:

1. Given the importance of family life, the US Catholic bishops believe that family reunification should continue to be a central part of US immigration policy. Yet our current US immigration policy tends to divide families rather than to reunite them. Two million immigrants have been deported under President Obama's administration. How can we ensure that family reunification is at the heart of US immigration policy?
2. Immigrant children continue to cross the US – Mexico border in increasing numbers each year. Many come to escape abuse or violence in their home countries. Others come to find family members already in the US. Some are victims of human trafficking. What can we do to address the root causes of migration?
3. Children are currently under the care of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, a division of Health and Human Services. The average stay in the program is 29 days, and 85% are eventually reunited with their families. Adults, in contrast, are detained in immigration detention centers under harsh conditions. How can we move away from the criminalization of immigration to a national policy that reflects values more in line with our faith to welcome the stranger?

Take Action

- Read the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' report from the mission trip to Central America to investigate the flight of unaccompanied children to the United States:
uscgb.org/about/migration-policy/upload/Mission-To-Central-America-FINAL-2.pdf
- Take steps to help unaccompanied minors in your community, such as passing a resolution of welcome or conducting community outreach.
cliniclegal.org/resources/articles-clinic/globalizing-charity-7-ways-your-local-government-can-help-unaccompanied
- Unlike Central American children, unaccompanied children from Mexico are often quickly returned to their native country. Watch the Washington Office on Latin America's video "Mexican Migrant Children Forgotten at the Border"
wola.org/video/mexican_migrant_children__forgotten_border

Holy Week : March 29-April 4

Repentance and Hope

Lamentations are a part of our faith tradition. They transcend the logic of reason, rational analysis, study and planning. They pierce the crusty calluses of numbness, cynicism, indifference and denial.

Laments are cries of anguish and outrage, groans of deep pain and grief, utterances of profound protest and righteous indignation over injustice, wails of mourning and sorrow in the face of unbearable suffering. Laments name the present pain, and forthrightly acknowledge that life and relationships have gone terribly wrong. Laments both stem from and lead to deep compassion.

From: 'Racial Justice and the Catholic Church' by Bryan N. Massingale, 2010, Orbis Books

- When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. (Leviticus 19:33)

Woe to us who have conveniently forgotten the immigrant backgrounds that we came from and who have been hostile and inhospitable to those new immigrants who have recently sought refuge and a home with us. How easily we dismiss ourselves from “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates his brother, he is a liar; for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.” (1 John 3:20)

- Do not gloat over the day of your brother, the day of his disaster; Do not exult over the people of Judah on the day of their ruin; Do not speak haughtily on the day of distress! Do not enter the gate of my people on the day of their calamity; Do not gloat—especially you—over his misfortune on the day of his calamity; Do not lay hands upon his possessions on the day of his calamity! Do not stand at the crossroads to cut down his survivors; Do not hand over his fugitives on the day of distress! Near is the day of the Lord against all the nations! As you have done, so will it be done to you, your conduct will come back upon your own head. (Obadiah 1:12-15)

Woe to us who have been silent as suffering, confused and overwhelmed children are herded in large detention centers that lack adequate sanitation facilities, familiar foods, health care and legal counsel. Where is our compassion for those who died in the crossing and of the recently orphaned children who have not yet been reunited with family members in the US? Do we not believe when Jesus said “whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Matthew 25:40)

- You shall not oppress or afflict a resident alien, for you were once aliens residing in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 22:20)

Woe to us who have built an economy based on the inhumane treatment of our immigrants. We have gladly supplied our tables with the vegetables and fruits of their backbreaking labor without paying them a just wage, not allowing them to organize for better working conditions and not providing them with safe and decent housing. Our arrogance and privilege believes that we are doing the migrants a favor by providing work. What have we to say if we believe the words found in Leviticus 13:34 “You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself.”

- What you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me. (Matthew 25:45)

Woe to us who have no compassion for the 20.9 million immigrant people who are enslaved worldwide, with 22% of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation. (International Labor Organization statistics) Woe to us who seek to hire people from other countries as domestic help, nannies and other laborers because our exploitation of their work allows us to not pay just wages, benefits nor taxes. Woe also to the ones who judge the prostitute but remain silent about and unconcerned with the demand for sex trafficking. How will we respond to the question, “Why did you neglect me?”

A Prayer

God of Goodness, we come to you humbled by the truth of our lives. We have been busy about so many things, that we have neglected to show concern and tenderness towards our struggling immigrant brothers and sisters. We have not dared to speak when they have been unjustly treated, we’ve not cared about their perilous journey to this country nor their heartbreak at having to flee from terror and violence only to be met by fear, suspicion and detention. Our indifference will be our judge.

Give us your eyes to see and ears to hear the immigrants’ cries to belong. Give us hearts open to welcome and to accept the gifts that they are. Grant us the ability to forgive ourselves and to ask for reconciliation from the One who gave His life so that all of us might live fully.

Take Action

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right? There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular but one must take it because it is right.”

When have you ever made one of those decisions in your life? Is it time to do so now?

- Write a creed from the lived experience of your life. Beginning each sentence: I believe...
- Pray for yourself today that you have the courage to be open to the healing power of God.
- Avail yourself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation so as to restore your whole being to all God’s people.

Easter : April 5

An Easter Reflection

Revelation 7:9-10

After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.”

Closing

He is risen! And because of what Jesus has done for us, we have become a resurrection people—called to live into God’s reign on earth as it is in heaven. Over the course of Lent, you have reflected on God’s vision of shared abundance, hospitality, and love of neighbor. Now, invite your members of Congress to share that vision, and offer witness to them that you have faith our broken immigration system can be redeemed.

Take Action

Take action by [sending](#) the US Conference of Catholic Bishops Justice for Immigrants Postcard to your member of Congress (Postcards can be prepared at justiceforimmigrants.org). Tell your representative that you support 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.

Visit the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Justice for Immigrants Campaign website for more ways you can get involved: justiceforimmigrants.org.

Promotional Resources

Bulletin Announcement

- This Lent, the Justice for Immigrants Campaign of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) invites you to pray, fast, learn, give, and advocate for just and humane immigration reform in solidarity with immigrants and refugees. Visit justiceforimmigrants.org/lent to download the 2015 Lenten toolkit and related resources.

Social Media Text

Share your Lenten promise on social media. Below is sample language:

- This Lent pray, fast, learn, give, and advocate for just and humane immigration reform. Learn more at justiceforimmigrants.org/lent #Lentenpromise

Graphics for Social Media

Visit justiceforimmigrants.org/lent to download graphics that can be used on Facebook, Twitter and Google+.

Other ways to promote your Lenten promise:

- Post a news story about need for immigration reform.
- Invite friends to join you in making a Lenten promise or in taking action on immigration issues.
- Share pictures of how you are taking steps to fulfill your Lenten promise using #Lentenpromise.



Example Facebook Timeline Image

For ideas on how to use social media resources and to stay up to date on immigration news, connect with JFI online.



[fb.com/JusticeForImmigrants](https://www.facebook.com/JusticeForImmigrants)



[@usccbfi](https://twitter.com/usccbfi)



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

"We are one family under God"

Justice for Immigrants
3211 Fourth St. NE | Washington, DC 20017
202-541-3174 | jfi@usccb.org