
HOPE IN A TIME OF POVERTY: IMMIGRATION

A Reflection from the USCCB Department of Justice, Peace & Human Development



*“You shall treat the alien who resides with you **no differently** than the natives born among you; you shall **love** the alien as yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I, the LORD, am your God.”*

Leviticus 19:34

We are privileged to be living through a critical moment in our nation’s history. Buoyed up by hope, major reforms that make an enormous difference in the lives of millions of our immigrant brothers and sisters may soon be a reality. So much depends on our constant prayers, engagement with our neighbors, and our continued communication with our elected officials urging them to support comprehensive immigration reform.

Our immigrant brothers and sisters are part of our communities. They raise families, open businesses, contribute to our economy and social fabric and worship in our parishes and churches. Many of them arrived here as children, or are waiting for their visas, or have lived here for decades pursuing the American dream. Most of them had no legal path, no place to “get in line.” For over 11 million who lack proper documents, life is a daily challenge.

Immigrants without documents live with the constant threat of deportation as they drive their children to school or consider whether to risk attending Mass. They live in fear that a traffic stop could lead to the trauma of family separation, which too often leaves children as the victims of the broken immigration system. They are exposed to employers who take advantage of their unauthorized immigrant status and insist they work for less and not stand up for their rights.

The bishops of the United States have been clear that a comprehensive solution is needed, one that would bring our brothers and sisters out of the shadows and permit them to live with dignity and respect. Citizenship for those 11 million people who have contributed to our communities and economy is a matter of justice, but it is also a commonsense way of ensuring community safety, reuniting families, and raising wages for everyone. Openness to their talents, gifts and leadership is part of our Christian witness.

The Catholic Church has long valued the contribution of immigrants to our country, especially because we are a Church of immigrants. The bishops’ Justice for Immigrants Campaign is a powerful sign of the Catholic community’s solidarity with those who migrate to our country. Organizations supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) have been working for decades to promote justice for immigrants and

help them to integrate into our communities. It's never too late to get involved!

At this critical moment, the bishops have called the faithful to express support for comprehensive immigration reform to Members of Congress once more. As an immigrant Church, it's important we live up to our heritage and core convictions! Together, we can help pass immigration reform that offers a path to citizenship, reunites families and addresses the root causes of migration abroad.

*"These brothers and sisters of ours were trying to escape difficult situations to find some serenity and **peace**; they were looking for a better place for themselves and their families... How often do such people fail to find understanding, fail to find acceptance, fail to find **solidarity**."*

Pope Francis ⁱ

As the Book of Leviticus reminds us, we enjoy the most prized citizenship above all, citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven, where we are all children of God and no one is illegal. We're called to recog-

nize that God-given dignity in the migrant, and create a country and communities welcoming of their contributions and respectful of their human dignity.

ⁱ Francis, [Homily during Visit to Lampedusa](#), 08 July 2013.



Immigration and CCHD

Myrla Baldonado's college degree prepared her for advertising and economics, but when she arrived in Chicago from the Philippines, she became a caregiver in Chicago. The work was steady, but the wages and conditions were not.

"I was paid \$110 for a 24-hour shift. That amounts to less than \$5 an hour," Myrla says, which is not enough to support herself and her four children. "To stretch the money, I ate mostly eggs and bananas."

She describes becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant and providing meticulous personal and domestic care for elderly patients, while battling loneliness, isolation and the humiliation of sexual harassment, physical and verbal abuse.

Myrla joined other immigrant caregivers at CCHD-funded Latino Union, where she shared her experiences and learned about her rights. The White House recognized her advocacy for fellow workers by naming her a Champion of Change in 2013.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Visit www.usccb.org/jphd for the complete series of reflections.

Act Now! Sign up for Justice for Immigrants Action alerts here: <http://www.capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/issues/alert/?alertid=14503781&type=CO>

Justice for Immigrants Website
www.justiceforimmigrants.org

Homily during Visit to Lampedusa
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa_en.html

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope

This is a pastoral letter concerning migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States. (<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/strangers-no-longer-together-on-the-journey-of-hope.cfm>)

