



## Immigration Issues of Concern

### Background

The Catholic Conferences of Michigan and Ohio are the official representatives of the Catholic Church in matters related to public policy in their respective states. Both Conferences have many programs and personnel ministering to Hispanic immigrants.

On September 10, 2008, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration issued a statement on *Worksite Enforcement Raids*. This statement reads in part...

*"We have witnessed first-hand the suffering of immigrant families and are gravely concerned about the collateral human consequences of immigration enforcement raids on the family unit. Many of our local parishes have helped respond to human needs generated by these enforcement actions, providing counseling and legal services to parents and children and basic needs assistance to immigrant communities..."*

*As our government confronts the challenges of immigration, let it not forget one of its core duties: protecting the family unit as the fundamental institution upon which society and government itself depends.*

*While we do not question the right and duty of our government to enforce the law, we do question whether worksite enforcement raids are the most effective and humane method for performing this duty, particularly as they are presently being implemented. In this regard, we ask the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to immediately pledge to take the following actions to mitigate the human costs of these raids...*

- Mechanisms should be instituted to allow family members to remain together and to locate each other during and following an enforcement action.*
- Primary, not simply sole, caregivers should be released following an enforcement action to care for their children. A variety of release mechanisms, including parole in the public interest, release on recognizance, bail, and alternatives to detention should be utilized for this purpose:*
- DHS should facilitate access to meaningful legal representation for arrested individuals so that they are aware of their legal rights and options..."*

## Discussion Items

In the spirit of our national bishops' statement, our delegation would like to discuss the following five items. Each item addresses our concerns for respecting the God-given dignity of persons and the importance of preserving and protecting family life.

- 1. We propose the designation of an *ombudsman* within the ICE regional office who will serve as a direct contact for our Catholic immigrant workers.** This person(s) would respond to our requests on behalf of the detainee and/or the detainee's family for essential information regarding the holding location, legal timelines and family contact provisions. This *ombudsman* would also investigate and address case-specific concerns that come to our attention regarding the varying humanitarian needs of the detainee and/or the detainee's family.
- 2. We ask for your assurance that detainees are asked about their medical needs, professionally evaluated, and provided with needed medicine, medical treatment and/or medical supplies in a timely manner.**
- 3. We express our opposition to the recent Attorney General's decision that questions an immigrant's right to legal counsel, and severely limits an immigrant's right to challenge a ruling of the court due to effective assistance of counsel.** We encourage your promotion of a detainee's need for legal representation. We request that this ICE office advocate and/or promote protocols that help assure that detained immigrants are informed of their right to legal counsel and/or to contact their consulate. We especially encourage that enforcement officials inform the detainee of their right to see an Immigration Judge, and not to ask detainees to *sign off* on documents that would deny legal representation prior to their Court hearing.
- 4. We ask for your assurance that this ICE office will work with the judicial system, and advocate for the establishment of reasonable and affordable bail bonds for detainees.** A variety of release mechanisms, including parole in the public interest, release on recognizance, and alternatives to detention should also be advocated and pursued.
- 5. We seek coordination and cooperation with the Catholic Church's various charitable organizations in Ohio and Michigan to help persons who are being deported to make arrangements in their country of origin for their return.** This may include the notification of family and friends as to the date and destination of the deportation, so that the Catholic Church's partner organizations in the country of origin will be able to assist with housing, transportation, financial support, or other humanitarian needs that may arise.