



Concerns and Recommendations

Ohio Immigration Enforcement Legislation

Immigration reform has stalled at the federal level. There remains great divisiveness both within the legislature and throughout the community. Our immigrant outreach workers report an increase in prejudice and incidents of violence towards many Ohio immigrant workers. There is much fear throughout our Hispanic communities. The heightened enforcement practices have resulted in abusive profiling, insensitive treatment of family members, and increased reports of workplace injustice.

Two bills, SB 260 and HB 308, have been introduced in Ohio promoting an enhanced state enforcement of federal immigration laws. The Catholic Conference of Ohio acknowledges the right of the state to explore ways to support the enforcement of federal laws. We continue, however, to have questions and concerns over whether this type of legislation is needed and helpful.

- **We** believe many of the federal immigration laws are unjust and unnecessarily restrictive. Comprehensive reform is needed. Since the federal government is currently implementing enhanced enforcement measures throughout the country, Ohio should show judicious restraint in pursuing additional state enforcement legislation.
- **We** believe that an Ohio study commission should be established prior to pursuing state enforcement legislation. The study commission should be comprised of interested parties including federal and state officials, business and religious leaders, and worker representatives.
- **We** believe that state emphasis on enforcement will be “harmfully provocative” during this time of heightened rhetoric and violence against immigrant workers in Ohio.
- **We** prefer that the Ohio General Assembly use its political clout to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at the federal level. Such reform should include a more workable *guest worker* program and provide a viable path to citizenship for current immigrant workers.

There is a need in Ohio for:

- **G**reater civility, thoughtful discussion and prayerful reflection regarding societal attitudes and approaches toward immigrant workers. Immigrant workers provide important and necessary contributions to the common good of our state through the work they perform and the taxes they pay;
- **A** recommitment to the vision and goals expressed in the 2001 Ohio Bishops’ pastoral statement, *God’s Welcoming Presence: A Call to Stand in Solidarity with Ohio’s Immigrants*;
- **O**ur Catholic community to continue being a source of spiritual strength, neighborly love, refuge and vocal advocacy for the dignity and human needs of immigrants;
- **A**n end to harassment, violence, and unnecessary raids. Immigrant workers are NOT a greater of a security and safety threat to Ohioans than other persons.



Prayer & Reflection

Immigration Reform

The Ohio Catholic Bishops' Statement: *God's Welcoming Presence: A Call To Stand In Solidarity With Ohio's Immigrants* (February 2001) includes the following reflections:

“God’s love transcends every human barrier, language, culture, and country border. The Gospel calls us to welcome immigrants with compassion and hopeful expectation. “ I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matt. 25:35). These words challenge each of us to see the dignity and sacredness of God that is reflected through people of all cultures and nations, regardless of legal status.

Pope John Paul II stated: “Who is my neighbor? The neighbor is every human being, without exception. It is not necessary to ask his nationality, or to which social or religious group he belongs. If he is in need, he must be helped...

We believe each person has opportunities to reach out in welcome to immigrant workers. Consider the following questions:

1. Are we as a society, as church, as employers, as consumers treating immigrants with dignity and justice?
2. Do my own attitudes toward immigrants reflect God’s love and concern for all persons?
3. How am I involved in reaching out to new immigrants in support of their pastoral and material needs?
4. What am I willing to do on behalf of the justice needs of immigrants?”

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops encourages that the following prayer be prayed daily.

A Justice Prayer

Come, O Holy Spirit!

Come, open us to the wonder, beauty, and dignity of the diversity found in each culture, in each face, and in each experience we have of the other among us.

Come, fill us with generosity as we are challenged to let go and allow others to share with us the goods and beauty of earth.

Come; heal the divisions that keep us from seeing the face of Christ in all men, women, and children.

Come, free us to stand with and for those who must leave their own lands in order to find work, security, and welcome in a new land, one that has enough to share.

Come, bring us understanding, inspiration, wisdom, and the courage needed to embrace change and stay on the journey.

Come, O Holy Spirit, show us the way.