



## Concerns and Recommendations Ohio Immigration Issues

September 2008

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

Two bills, SB 260, which would enhance state enforcement of federal immigration laws, and HB 477, which would declare English to be the official language of the State, received considerable debate this past year. Further legislative action is a possibility in the “lame duck” session this November.

- The Catholic Conference of Ohio does not believe SB 360 and HB 477 are needed. Passage of the mostly symbolic English as the official language of the state bill (HB 477), as well as passage of a state enforcement bill (SB 360), will be “harmfully provocative” during this time of heightened rhetoric and violence against immigrant workers in Ohio.
- The Catholic Bishops of Ohio 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.
- The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have urged our elected and appointed officials to turn away from enforcement-only methods and direct their energy toward the adoption of comprehensive immigration reform legislation. On September 10, 2008, the U.S. Bishops called upon the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and President Bush to reexamine the use of worksite enforcement raids as an immigration enforcement tool. They state that the humanitarian costs of these raids are immeasurable and unacceptable in a civilized society. [CLICK HERE](#)
- The Catholic Bishops of Ohio have also voiced concerns over whether there are sufficient safeguards in place during Immigration raids throughout Ohio. The treatment of immigrants arrested in raids by sheriffs and immigration officials varies greatly. In some cases, enforcement officials strive to assure that family members are sufficiently cared for and fully informed about their situation. Unfortunately, in many cases this does not occur. Often families are not informed of the location, prison or detention center where their family member has been detained. They often are not told how to secure a bond for their release; nor are they supplied with basic information regarding legal proceedings and their right to an attorney. Adequate care for the children of detained parents is not evident. Persons detained with pre-existing medical needs are not given sufficient access to treatment. Immigrant workers and their families are not treated with respect and dignity.

There is a need in Ohio for greater 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. There is also a need for 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](#).



# 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. **A**re we as a society, as church, as employers, as consumers treating immigrants with dignity and justice?
2. **D**o my own attitudes toward immigrants reflect God’s love and concern for all persons?
3. **H**ow am I involved in reaching out to new immigrants in support of their pastoral and material needs?
4. **W**hat 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

**C**ome, O Holy Spirit!

**C**ome, 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.

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

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

**C**ome, 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.

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

**C**ome, O Holy Spirit, show us the way.