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WE
are **ONE**
FAMILY
under
GOD

USCCB National
Migration Week
January 4-10, 2015

**ADVOCACY AND
ACTIVITY GUIDE**

**IMMIGRATION SUNDAY MN
FEAST OF OUR LORD'S EPIPHANY
JANUARY 4, 2015**



MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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ADVOCACY, EDUCATION & MINISTRY ACTIVITIES

ADVOCACY

When we consider the matter of migration, we must recognize that this is a worldwide phenomenon. All across the globe, more and more families and individuals in recent years have felt compelled to leave their home countries. Some are refugees from violence or human trafficking. Others are escaping political oppression or economic hardship. All seek a better future for themselves and their families. Yet, often migration leads to other problems, including harm to the family—recognized most recently at the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family.

This migration crisis calls us to remember our common humanity. This is the simple recognition that we are all one human family. Before we are citizens of this nation, we are foremost brothers and sisters—children of a loving God who invites us to a new relationship to one another. Thus, we *each* have a responsibility to work for the objective good of others, including those brothers and sisters who come from other lands. We have an obligation to protect the inherent and fundamental dignity of each person (*see* CCC 1897-1948).

We encourage parishes not only to educate and reflect on the foundations of Catholic teaching concerning migration and immigrants, but to share meaningful, simple ways to help promote and protect the human dignity of every person—every family—in today’s world. Below are three, concrete ways that your parish could support and advocate for migrant families with justice and compassion.

All advocacy materials and “action” links can be found on the MCC Immigration Sunday MN page (www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/).

3 ways parishes can make a difference:

1. **LOCALLY: Urge Minnesota Lawmakers to support legislation that establishes a provisional driver’s license for undocumented immigrants who meet certain criteria.**

Many immigrant families today are in an impossible position: they want to be able to fulfill their basic obligations to their family but do not want to take the risk of being separated from their family by being detained or deported for driving without a license.¹

Legislation that allows undocumented immigrants to attain a provisional driver’s license, if they meet certain criteria, addresses a basic need of immigrants that helps them strengthen their families, while also creating a safer driving environment in Minnesota. Allowing migrants

¹ Driving and Deportation report from The Advocates for Human Rights, 2014.

to obtain a provisional driver's license would help immigrants maintain a more stable and productive family life, which includes being able to fulfill basic care-giving obligations like going to school, attending church, taking sick family members to the doctor, and shopping for food.

Encourage parishioners to contact state legislators and Governor Dayton to urge them to support provisional driver's licenses in Minnesota. Parishioners can contact lawmakers through the MCC Action Center (www.mncc.org/actioncenter).

2. FEDERALLY: Encourage federal reform of U.S. family detention practices.

Your parish can show its support for more dignified detention alternatives for women and children by joining the USCCB's Justice for Immigrants postcard campaign opposing inhumane family detention.

Many of the women and children confined to the new detention facilities in New Mexico and Texas are survivors of domestic abuse and targeted community violence. These trauma victims are coming to the country for protection against violence and are subsequently put into a detention facility by our government. Alternatives to detention, such as community-based models and case management, are effective at ensuring compliance with immigration court proceedings while better protecting the well-being of migrant mothers and their children.

Find more information and download postcards to send to Congresspersons from the MCC's Immigration Sunday MN page (www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/) or the MCC Action Center (www.mncc.org/actioncenter).

3. INTERNATIONALLY: Support Christians fleeing from persecution and violence in the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands of terrified Iraqi Christians and other migrants from the region are desperate for help. Entire families are on the run, as violent extremists vow to expel or destroy them all. Many Christians have been threatened with death. They have seen their villages attacked and their churches burned.

Consider having your parish take up a collection for Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), a papal humanitarian and pastoral support agency for the region that has on-the-ground initiatives helping Iraqi Christian refugees and other migrants. By donating, your parish will be helping CNEWA meet the basic needs of migrant families in the Near East. You'll be supporting the brave priests, sisters, and lay people who are struggling to provide these families with emergency care.

Founded by Pope Pius XI in 1926, CNEWA works for, through, and with Eastern Catholic churches to identify needs and implement solutions. Parishioners can visit the MCC Action

Center (www.mncc.org/actioncenter) or the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (www.CNEWA.org) to make a donation.

Parishioners can also contact their U.S. Congresspersons to urge them to **support comprehensive reform of the U.S. immigration system** via the USCCB Justice for Immigrant's website (www.justiceforimmigrants.org).

While the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) welcomes the relief that the Obama administration's executive order will provide to many immigrant families by deferring deportations, the relief is not permanent and the broader problems with the U.S. immigration system are still not fixed.

Immigrant families continue to be torn apart by deportations, uncertainty about their status, and delays in the U.S. visa application process that can take years, even decades. Many men and women who are immigrants continue to be being exploited in the workplace.

The recent executive order issued by President Obama is no substitute for the urgent need to overhaul this country's broken immigration system, and the USCCB continues to urge cooperation between Congress and the President to create permanent reforms.

An FAQ on the President's Executive Order, highlighting what *it does and does not do*, will be available on the MCC Immigration Sunday MN webpage by mid-December 2014. (<http://www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/>)

REFER TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR AN ADVOCACY BULLETIN INSERT.

WE are ONE FAMILY under GOD

National Migration Week / January 4-10, 2015



Fleeing the fury of an evil king, the Holy Family is an embodiment of the millions of families fleeing violence and death around the world.

Imagine Joseph, struggling in Egypt to support his family as they await a time when they can return home. Or, think of the difficult journey that the Holy Family faced as they fled the dangers in their homeland. These are problems that many migrants confront on a daily basis as they try to make their way in a new land, or simply struggle to get there in the first place.

3 ways YOU can make a DIFFERENCE

1. LOCALLY: Urge Minnesota lawmakers to support legislation that establishes a provisional driver's license for undocumented immigrants who meet certain criteria. Many immigrant families today are in an impossible position: they want to be able to fulfill their basic obligations to their family but do not want to risk being separated from their families by being detained or deported for driving without a license. Allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain a provisional driver's license, if they meet certain criteria, would help immigrants maintain a more stable, productive family life, which includes being able to fulfill basic obligations like going to school, attending church, taking sick family members to the doctor, and shopping for food.

2. FEDERALLY: Encourage federal reform of U.S. "family detention" practices.

Many of the women and children confined to the new detention facilities in New Mexico and Texas are survivors of domestic abuse and targeted community violence. These trauma victims are coming to the country for protection against violence and are subsequently put into a detention facility by our government. Alternatives to detention, such as community-based models and case management, are effective at ensuring compliance with immigration court proceedings while better protecting the well-being of mothers and their children.

3. INTERNATIONALLY: Support Christians fleeing from persecution and violence in the Middle East.

Hundreds of thousands of terrified Iraqi Christians and other migrants from the region are desperate for help. Entire families are on the run, as violent extremists vow to expel or destroy them all. Many Christians have been threatened with death. They have seen their villages attacked and their churches burned. Consider making a donation to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA), a papal humanitarian and pastoral support agency for the region that has on-the-ground initiatives helping Iraqi Christian refugees and other migrants in need of emergency assistance.

Visit the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) Action Center for easy ways to TAKE ACTION on any of the three issues highlighted above.

WWW.MNCC.ORG/ACTIONCENTER

MCC supports the social ministry of the Catholic bishops of Minnesota.



EDUCATION

1. **Immigration-themed parish movie showing or book club reading.** Host a movie viewing or book discussion on an immigration-related topic. Examine the movie or book, and the issue(s) it confronts, through the lens of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota.

Movie suggestions

- **ABRAZOS** follows the journey of a group of U.S. citizen children who travel 3,000 miles, from Minnesota to Guatemala, to their parents' homeland to meet their grandparents for the first time. It offers a first-hand account of the effects that the current U.S. immigration system has on Minnesota children and their families. (<http://abrazosthedoc.blogspot.com/p/donate.html>)
- **The Least of These** provides an inside look at the federal government's practices associated with family detentions. (<http://theleastofthese-film.com>)
- **Dying to Live—a migrant's journey** is a look at the human face of the immigrant. It explores who these people are, why they leave their homes, and what they face in their journey. (<https://dyingtolive.nd.edu/>)

Book suggestions

- **On 'Strangers no Longer': perspectives on the historic U.S.-Mexican Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Migration** (www.justiceforimmigrants.org/OnStrangersNoLonger.htm)
- **Immigration and the Next America: Renewing the Soul of Our Nation** by Archbishop José Gomez (<https://www.osv.com/Shop/Product?ProductCode=T1422>)

2. **Facilitate a discussion based on the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization test:** Host an evening gathering to discuss immigration and the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota. At the beginning of the gathering, invite parishioners to take the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Naturalization test. However, do not tell parishioners where the test is from until after they have completed it. Discuss the test, personal perceptions of immigrants, and the struggles we all sometimes have with *welcoming the stranger*. The test can be downloaded from the USCIS website (www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1).
3. **Host a forum on migration or U.S. immigration policy:** Host a speaker or panel discussion on migration or immigration policy. Invite speakers from your community (business, education, faith, and legislative). Consider inviting immigrants from your parish or community to share their personal stories. Examine current immigration policies in both the United States and Minnesota. Discuss the issues in light of past, current, and proposed legislation. Contact MCC

Policy and Outreach Coordinator, Kathryn Mollen, to help connect your school or parish to speakers or Catholic immigrants who may be willing to share their story (651-256-7586/kmollen@mncc.org).

4. **Educate on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration:** Offer a parish education program on Catholic Social Teaching on immigration. Use copies of the 2012 immigration statement from the bishops of Minnesota to facilitate discussion (contact MCC at 651-227-8777 to order copies). Invite your local diocesan or Catholic Charities immigration contact.

MINISTRY

PARISH COMMUNITY WELCOMING IDEAS

Meet and Greet at Liturgies. Develop a team whose ministry is to welcome people, be they regulars or newcomers, when they are entering the church.

Newcomers are acknowledged / welcomed by the priest after Mass or through the Mass intercessions. Everyone is involved in the welcoming of newcomers—sometimes the most gratifying welcome a visitor can receive is from someone she wouldn't expect to welcome her, in a place she didn't expect it to happen.

House Blessings. Develop a team who will visit newcomers to the parish; have a priest come with to offer them a house blessing.

Baptismal teams. The Baptism of a child can be an important point of contact between your parish and newcomers. It can be used as an ideal opportunity to welcome new families—new life!—into your parish.

Connect with other local immigrant services. We often struggle to know how best to engage with newcomers in our communities. There will be many organizations working with immigrants in your local area. Contact them! They may be able to point to specific needs immigrants in your community have or to establish projects that you might support.

Celebrate the universality of God's faithful servants. Consider recognizing feast days that are significant to the cultures represented within your parish community. Reach out to parishioners who are from the culture of those saints you celebrate to find out what sacred traditions may be good to incorporate into the celebration. Beautiful sacred traditions are found so many cultures!

YOUTH ACTIVITIES

- **Include youth in the advocacy activities.** Encourage children to get involved in their communities to give them an opportunity to advocate on behalf of their immigration neighbors and fellow parishioners—kids and families with whom they may be friends. Legislators do listen to children. While they may not yet have the right to vote, their parents DO!
- **Explore family history.** Ask children to bring in the oldest family photo they can find. Photocopy the family photo and have children write family stories about their photos. Mount photos and stories on a piece of cardstock. Frame each picture and story on a larger piece of construction paper and have children illustrate the frames. Create a large quilt with all the pictures. Display the quilt in the gathering space of your church.
- **Why did they leave home?** Invite immigrant parents or grandparents to speak about their experiences as immigrants. Have children interview their parents and grandparents.
- **Ancestry interview.** Host a luncheon or tea party for grandparents and grandchildren. Provide an opportunity for children to interview their grandparents about their ancestry. Have children record their responses in homemade books.
- **Immigration tests.** Invite youth to take the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) naturalization exam, but do not tell youth where the exam is from prior to having them take it. Distribute copies of the actual exam, which can be accessed on the Internet at the following link. Allow time for discussion after youth complete the exam. (www.uscis.gov/citizenship/quiz/learners/study-test/study-materials-civics-test/naturalization-self-test-1)

ONLINE RESOURCES

Minnesota Catholic Conference Advocacy Area pages: Migration (www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/) and **Immigration Sunday MN** (www.mncc.org/advocacy-areas/migration/immigration-sunday-mn/)

A resource page with background on the latest parish, state, and federal-based migration advocacy activities and priorities of the Catholic bishops of Minnesota.

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (www.cliniclegal.org)

CLINIC is a 501 (c) (3) organization created by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to support a rapidly growing network of community-based immigration programs and services.

Justice for Immigrants Campaign (www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

A USCCB advocacy organization calling for comprehensive immigration reform in Congress.

USCCB Office of Migration and Refugee Services (www.usccb.org/mrs/)

Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People
(www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/index.htm)

Papal Messages on Migration Archive (www.usccb.org/mrs/papalstatements.shtml)
Messages on the World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Minnesota State Demographic Center (<http://www.demography.state.mn.us/>)

The Minnesota State Demographic Center analyzes and distributes Minnesota and U.S. data.