

## Public Policy Statement Regarding Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Comprehensive immigration reform continues to remain a humane solution to our broken immigration system. Reforming current law enables undocumented workers and their families to remain together so they can fully contribute their skills and talents to our communities while maintaining a strong family unit. The economic and political motivations that compel immigrants to risk unauthorized entry into America are varied, but family reunification, a need to work, and a desire to provide monetary support for their family are often the driving factors for immigrants entering the U.S.

Privileged economic nations, such as the U.S., have an obligation to serve the universal common good whenever possible. In the current global economic environment in which labor demands in the U.S. attract foreign laborers, the U.S. should strive to establish an immigration system that provides earned legal avenues for individuals to enter the U.S. in a safe, orderly, and dignified manner.

### Catholic Charities of Idaho and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise's Call for Reform

The Catholic Church has always supported the right of a sovereign nation to secure its borders. Yet, we seek to reduce the number of disrupted lives and communities in Idaho by **supporting just and fair federal comprehensive immigration policies** that address the needs of newcomers as well as the security and economic health of our nation. Following the Conference of Catholic Bishops, Justice for Immigrants Campaign CCI and the RCDB support the following policy statements regarding immigration:

#### 1. Global Anti-Poverty Efforts

Many migrants are compelled to leave their homes out of economic necessity in order to provide even the most basic of needs for themselves and their families. The bishops' call for international efforts designed to create conditions in which people do not have to leave their homes out of necessity. Trade, international economic aid, debt relief, and other types of economic policies should be pursued that result in people not having to migrate in desperation in order to survive.

#### 2. Expanded Opportunities to Reunify Families

U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents must endure many years of separation from close family members who they want to join them in the United States. The backlogs of available visas for family members results in waits of five, ten, fifteen, and more years of waiting for a visa to become available. The bishops call for a reduction of the pending backlog and more visas available for family reunification purposes.

#### 3. Temporary Worker Program

The U.S. economy depends upon the labor provided by migrants. Therefore, many migrants come to the United States to fill jobs. The bishops acknowledge this reality and call for a more rational and humane system by which laborers from other countries can enter the country legally to fill positions in the labor force, including on a temporary basis. Because the U.S. experience with temporary workers programs has been fraught with abuses, the bishops call for a temporary worker program that includes:

- Path to permanent residency which is achievable/verifiable

- Family unity which allows immediate reunification of family members
- Job portability which allows workers to change employers
- Labor protections which apply to U.S. workers
- Enforcement mechanisms and resources to enforce worker's rights
- Wages and benefits which do not undercut domestic workers
- Mobility between U.S. and homeland and within U.S.
- Labor-market test to ensure U.S. workers are not harmed

#### **4. Broad-based legalization**

For those in this country without proper immigration documentation, opportunities should be provided for them to obtain legalization if they can demonstrate good moral character and have built up equities in this country. Such an “earned” legalization should be achievable and independently verifiable.

#### **5. Restoration of due process**

In recent years, immigrants have been subject to laws and policies that debase our country's fundamental commitment to individual liberties and due process. These laws and policies, including detention for months without charges, secret hearings, and ethnic profiling, signal a sea of change in our government's policies and attitudes towards immigrants. We are a nation with a long, rich tradition of welcoming newcomers. Government policies that unfairly and inappropriately confuse immigration with terrorism do not make us safer, tarnish our heritage, and damage our standing abroad. The bishops urge our government to revisit these laws and to make the appropriate changes consistent with due process rights. Also in this context, the bishops call for reforming our system for responding to asylum seekers and considering their claims. Today, asylum seekers must meet a very high bar for demonstrating their claim for asylum and are incarcerated in the meantime. The bishops believe that our nation can both protect its citizens from terrorists and remain a safe haven for legitimate asylum seekers fleeing persecution.

Immigration, while a political issue, is a fundamental moral issue which impacts human life and dignity. Citizenship does not grant basic human rights, being a person does. We have a responsibility to protect, support, and encourage the family unit for the basic well-being of the entire society, and we seek to promote family stability and end immigration enforcement practices that violate the dignity of the human person, separate families, and lead to exploitations and abuse.

---

**Foundational Catholic Values Guiding Catholic Charities of Idaho and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Boise  
Public Policy Position on Comprehensive Immigration Reform**

The rich traditions of the Catholic Church's social teachings identify five principle values which guide the Church's view on immigration issues.

**Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland**

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

**Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families**

The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

**Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders**

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories but rejects such control when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.

**Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection**

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that immigrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.

**The human dignity and human rights of undocumented immigrants should be respected**

Regardless of their legal status, immigrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

(from *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, 2003 <http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml>)