

## **The Archdiocese of Omaha and Immigration**

### **Q: What does the Catholic Church say about immigration?**

**A:** The task of welcoming immigrants, refugees, and displaced persons into full participation in the Church and society with equal rights and duties has long been an integral part of the Roman Catholic faith tradition. Church teachings on immigration and the treatment of immigrants derive from three principal sources: 1) the Bible, 2) papal encyclicals and letters, and 3) writings of the Catholic Bishops.

In addition to its emphasis on welcoming the stranger, Catholic Social Teaching emphasizes the inherent value and sacred nature of the family. Policies that have an impact on families should be designed to strengthen, rather than undermine, the family unit.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#2241) also speaks about the responsibility of immigrants: “Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

### **Q: Does the Archdiocese of Omaha support illegal immigration?**

**A:** No. The Archdiocese of Omaha does not support or encourage illegal immigration because 1) it is contrary to federal law and 2) it is not good either for society because of the presence of a large population living outside the legal structure or the immigrant, who is subjected to abuse and exploitation.

Most who come to the United States in an undocumented status come largely to seek a better life for themselves and their families, or simply to survive. While the archdiocese does not advocate undocumented immigration into the United States, it affirms the human dignity of the undocumented who live within our midst and makes every effort to ensure that their basic needs are met and that their human rights are not trampled upon.

### **Q: Does the Archdiocese of Omaha have the right to speak out on immigration issues, which is largely a political issue?**

All public policy issues have political aspects to them. The Archdiocese of Omaha is well within its rights to speak out on public policy issues of moral consequences and often does. In fact, the Archdiocese of Omaha has a moral obligation to speak out on issues which impact human dignity and human life. The Archdiocese of Omaha has special expertise in the immigration area because we are an immigrant church and we have helped assist immigrants assimilate into the state and nation for years.

### **Q: Shouldn't the United States uphold the “rule of law?”**

**A:** The teachings of the Catholic Church have consistently respected the right of the sovereign to control its borders, as well as the rule of law. However, the Church, along with other members of the democratic society, has the right to work to change laws or oppose laws which are believed to violate basic human dignity, dignity imbued by the Creator, and to advocate social remedies to their problems and to foster opportunities for their spiritual growth.

**Q: Isn't the Archdiocese of Omaha really interested in protecting illegal immigrants because most are Catholic?**

A: The Catholic Church's support for immigrants is not because the majority of immigrants at this time in our history are Latino or Catholic. The Catholic Church heeds our Lord's call to "welcome the stranger" to all children of God, regardless of their ethnicity, national origin, race or religion. This is evident in all of the social-service programs of the Catholic Church, which base their current outreach on "need" not "creed."

Having said that, the fact that the majority of immigrants are Catholic, makes it more real for many Catholics, since many immigrants are present in our service programs, health care centers, schools and parishes. We, as a Catholic community, directly witness the human consequences of a broken system each day, when immigrant families come to pastors and employees and ask for help for a family member who has been detained or deported by immigration authorities.

**Q: Illegal immigrants cause an unsustainable strain on social services. Doesn't the Catholic Church see that as a problem?**

A: There are several myths in this area. First, most studies show that at an early age immigrants consume more than they contribute; however, over a lifetime they are net contributors to our economy through the taxes they pay, the goods they produce and consume, and their labor. Moreover, legal immigrants do not qualify for health care or welfare for the first five years of their residency in the U.S., while undocumented immigrants never qualify for such benefits. In fact, undocumented immigrants pay billions in income taxes each year and billions in Social Security taxes, helping to sustain Social Security for the baby-boomer generation.

**Q: Would an influx of foreign workers to Nebraska take jobs away from Nebraska workers?**

A: Studies show that immigrant workers work in industries that do not attract sufficient workers. The percentage of Americans without a high school diploma has fallen from 50% in the 1960's to 7% today – and immigrants are filling the jobs vacated by increasingly educated Americans (CATO Institute, Center for Trade Policy Studies, April 21, 2008). Moreover, many unauthorized immigrants are low-wage employees whose hard work helps produce more affordable goods for all U.S. consumers. Deporting these workers will lead to labor shortages that will increase the cost of Nebraska goods.



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