

What does the Catholic Church say about Immigration?

The Catholic Church has held a strong interest in immigration and how public policy affects immigrants throughout its history in the United States. Based on scriptural and Catholic social teachings, as well as her own experience as an immigrating Church in the United States, the Catholic Church is compelled to raise her voice on behalf of those who are marginalized and whose God-given rights are not respected.

The Church believes that the present immigration system has often led to the undermining of the human dignity of immigrants and has kept families apart. For a multitude of reasons people have entered the United States without proper permission. The existing immigration system has not been able to resolve this situation resulting in millions of people living in this country without authorization, living in the shadows as they toil in jobs that would otherwise go unfilled.

Principles of Catholic Teaching on Immigration

- 1. All persons have the right to find economic and social opportunities in their own homeland.**
- 2. When people cannot sustain themselves and their families in their homeland, people may have a just reason to migrate.**
- 3. Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders for the sake of the common good of their citizens, always with an eye to the good of the larger community.**
- 4. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.**
- 5. The human dignity and human rights of migrants should be respected regardless of their legal status.**
- 6. 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.**

What are we to do?

At the heart of Catholic teaching on immigration is the truth that every human being is created in the image of God and so their God-given human rights are to be respected. We are also taught by Jesus that he is found in the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, and the stranger. Therefore, we are compelled to reach out to those immigrants who are already in our midst and welcome them to our community. We must work to change immigration laws so that both human needs and the right to control the border are respected. We should strive to improve the conditions in the countries of origin so that people do not feel the need to emigrate for economic or political reasons.