

# IMMIGRATION

## National Migration Week: From Many One Family of God

January 6-12 marked the 27<sup>th</sup> annual National Migration week observance proclaimed by the US Catholic Bishops. Bishop Wester, chairman of the Committee on Migration, in his letter to parishes stated “This year’s theme “From Many, One Family of God” reminds us that though we come from many cultures and places, we are all part of one human family and members of the one Body of Christ. Sadly, rather than embracing newcomers to our land whose circumstances have compelled them to seek new lives among us, we too often respond in fear and harbor attitudes of resentment and suspicion.”

He referred to the biblical story of the loaves and the fishes, when “Jesus’ disciples wanted to send away the crowd of 5,000 when the multitude came to hear him out of fear that they did not have enough to feed them. In the same way, we are tempted to turn away migrants fearing that our nation does not have enough resources – jobs, schools, housing, medical care, and other necessities, to accommodate those who have made their way to this abundant land.”

Wester went on to say “if we fail to minister to the needs of these newcomers, we fail our Lord himself for as he taught us in the Gospel: ‘Lord; when did we see you a stranger... and not minister to your needs? He will answer them, “Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.” [Mt. 26:44-45]

**The U.S. Catholic Bishops have identified five principles that should act as a guide for Catholics and policymakers in creating immigration reform legislation. The principles are:**

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

Economic, social, and political conditions in their homeland should provide an opportunity for a person to work and support his or her family in dignity and safety. In public policy terms, efforts should be made to address global economic inequities through just trade practices, economic development, and debt relief. Peacemaking efforts should be advanced to end conflict which forces persons to flee their homes.

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

In the current condition of the world, in which global poverty is rampant and political unrest has resulted in wars and persecution, migrants who are forced to leave their homes out of necessity and seek only to survive and support their families must be given special consideration.

**3. Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders.**

Nations have the right to protect and control their borders in the service of the common good of their citizens; however, nations also have an obligation to the universal global common good. The United States should establish an immigration system that provides legal avenues for persons to enter the nation legally in a safe, orderly, and dignified manner to obtain jobs and reunite with family members.

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

Persons who flee their home countries because they fear persecution should be afforded safe haven and protection in another country.

**5. The human rights and the human dignity of undocumented migrants should be respected.**

Persons who enter a nation without proper authorization or who over-stay their visas should be treated with respect and dignity. They should not be blamed for the social ills of a nation.