

The Honorable Paul Kanjorski
U.S. House of Representatives
2188 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

February 19, 2009

Dear Mr. Kanjorski,

Our congregation, the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, has established a corporate stance calling for comprehensive immigration reform.

Our stance is in support of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, calling for comprehensive immigration reform and includes the following four provisions:

- * regularization of the status of undocumented immigrants already in the US, with a path to residency and citizenship;
- * expansion of family-based immigration to reduce waiting times for separated families;
- * a guest worker program with protection for the rights of all workers;
- * border protection policies that prevent entry of terrorists and criminals while treating individuals with respect and humaneness.

We believe the bishops' position offers an opportunity to resolve a pressing problem facing our society; it is a balanced and humane approach to the issue of immigration. I hope that you will support comprehensive immigration reform when it is raised in the present congress.

Sincerely,



We Are Together On the Journey

Estamos Juntos En El Camino

Prayer Service for Immigrants

CALL TO PRAYER:

Leader 1:

God of movement, God of stillness, calm our hearts so we may recognize your presence with us now. Help us to grow in prayerful solidarity with all those who immigrate to this country, to our community. We lift up our brothers and sisters and the significance they hold in our lives. Help us to realize that, “We are together on the journey.” *Estamos juntos en el camino.*

All: We are together on the journey. *Estamos juntos en el camino.*

SONG SUGGESTIONS:

“Somos Todo El Pueblo de Dios/We Are All The People of God” by Peter Rubalcava

“Somos El Cuerpo de Cristo/ We Are The Body of Christ” by Bob Hurd

“One Lord” by Lori True (or any other appropriate song of unity and communion)



Leader 1:

Good and gracious God, the story of migration is long entwined in our collective history. Open our minds so we may listen anew to the ancient story of our Hebrew ancestors, as they journey out of Egypt.

SCRIPTURE:

Leader 2: A reading from the book of Exodus:

The Israelites set out from Ramses for Succoth, about six hundred on foot, not counting the children. A crowd of mixed ancestry also went up with them, besides their livestock, very numerous flocks and herds.

Since the dough they had brought out of Egypt was not leavened, they baked it into unleavened loaves. They had been rushed out of Egypt and had no opportunity even to prepare food for the journey. The time the Israelites had stayed in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

At the end of four hundred and thirty years, all the hosts of the Lord left the land of Egypt on this very date. This was a night of vigil for the Lord, as he led them out of the land of Egypt; so on this same night all the Israelites must keep a vigil for the Lord throughout their generations. (*Exodus 12: 37-42*)

Leader 1:

The following principles on migration are taken from the “Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration” co-written by the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States. Let us embrace the challenges our bishops place before us.

Leader 2: **The Five Principles of Migration from Catholic Social Teaching**

I) 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.”

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Leader 3: II) 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.”

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Leader 4: III) Sovereign nations have a right to protect 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 wealth. More powerful economic nations, which have the ability to protect and feed their residents, have a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows.”

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Leader 5: IV) 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 migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.”

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Leader 6: V) The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

“Regardless of their legal status, migrants, 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.”

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(Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, November, 2002 (No's. 35-38))

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, our journey through life is long and hard. We cannot make this trip alone; we must walk together on the journey. You promised us your Spirit. Help us to see your Spirit in those you send to journey with us.

In the refugee family, seeking safety from violence, **Let us see your Spirit.**

In the migrant worker, bringing food to our tables, **Let us see your Spirit.**

In the asylum seeker seeking justice for his or her family, **Let us see your Spirit.**

In the unaccompanied child, traveling in a dangerous world, **Let us see your Spirit.**

Teach us to recognize that as we walk with each other, You are present. Teach us to welcome not only the strangers in our midst but the gifts they bring as well: the invitation to conversion, communion, solidarity.

**This is the help you have sent: we are not alone. We are together on the journey,
and for this we give you thanks. Amen**

This prayer is an abbreviated version of a prayer developed by Catholic Relief Services