The Lord Your God Loves the Alien

So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. (Deut., 19:10)

Why is the Church concerned about immigration?

Our Faith teaches us to respect the life and the dignity of all human beings; immigration is an issue involving human beings and therefore the Church is concerned about it. “Fundamentally it is because it is our Gospel mandate, our instruction from our Savior to ‘welcome the stranger.’ In the Gospel of Matthew, Christ teaches us that salvation is gained by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and welcoming the stranger, for ‘what you have done to the least of my brothers, you have done unto me.’ He teaches us in the parable of the Good Samaritan that we must help all of our fellow human beings, even though they may be different from us in many respects.” (Cardinal Mahony, Bishops Call For Comprehensive Immigration Reform)

Why do people emigrate? (from www.usccb.org)

People emigrate from one country to another for a variety of complex reasons. Some are forced to move, due to conflict or to escape persecution and prejudices, while others may voluntarily emigrate to escape systemic poverty, economic instability, or a lack of viable employment in their country. According to the International Labor Organization, close to 550 million workers around the world live on less than one U.S. dollar a day, while almost half of the world’s 2.8 billion workers earn less than two dollars daily. Endemic poverty is not just a problem in Africa or South Asia, it also affects many in our own hemisphere. In the past fifteen years Mexico has lost more than two million agricultural jobs, and in the last twenty years the Mexican minimum wage has decreased by 70 percent in real terms. The CIA reports that 84 percent of Haitians live under the poverty line, with 54 percent in abject poverty. Such conditions stifle human flourishing by dramatically limiting opportunity and creating an environment in which the God-given gifts that we are all called to actualize can only atrophy. It should come as little surprise that in such circumstances people often seek a better life elsewhere, through both legal and illegal means.

The lure of a better life in developed countries promises opportunities, but carries also its own dangers. Women and children who migrate run the risk of being caught in the web of human trafficking, where they are compelled into a life of sexual slavery and forced labor. Others make it safely to their appointed destination, only to find themselves with the daunting task of getting adapted to different culture and norms, suffering from loneliness far away from family and friends, often with the additional pressure of earning enough to live and send money home to help the rest of family there. Only comprehensive immigration reform can simultaneously restore both order and human dignity.

The US Catholic Bishops call for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (from www.justiceforimmigrants.org)

In the pastoral letter issued by the Catholic bishops of Mexico and the United States in 2003, Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, the bishops acknowledge that the current immigration system is badly in need of reform and that a comprehensive approach to fixing it is required. The bishops offer recommendations for changing U.S. laws and policies to reflect the principles contained in Scripture and Catholic Social Teaching and to bring about a more humane and just immigration system in the United States.

The bishops’ reform includes the following key elements:

- continued global anti-poverty efforts, so that immigrants do not have to leave their homes out of necessity;
- a reduction in the backlogs of the family-based visa system;
- a temporary worker program that actually provides paths to legal residency for laborers and better protection of their rights;
- opportunities for undocumented immigrants to obtain legalization under certain conditions – employment, good moral character and current equities in this country;
- restoration of due process for immigrants who are here without papers, such as those seeking asylum.

Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or 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. 25:44-45)
**What does the Church Teach us?**

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 2241
The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

In the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, # 297
Immigration can be a resource for development rather than an obstacle to it. In the modern world, where there are still grave inequalities between rich countries and poor countries, and where advances in communications quickly reduce distances, the immigration of people looking for a better life is on the increase. These people come from less privileged areas of the earth and their arrival in developed countries is often perceived as a threat to the high levels of well-being achieved thanks to decades of economic growth. In most cases, however, immigrants fill a labor need which would otherwise remain unfilled in sectors and territories where the local workforce is insufficient or unwilling to engage in the work in question.

In “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope”, USCCB, 2003, # 36
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.

**What can you do**

- **Learn** more about the immigration issue and the church teaching about it by visiting the USCCB website www.justiceforimmigrants.org and reading “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope”, *A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States*, January 22, 2003 (www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml)
- **Advocate** for reform, visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org and www.txcatholic.org/resources.asp#immigration for more info.
- **Support** international development assistance: the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are partnering to confront global poverty. (www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty, www.crs.org)

**Mark Your Calendar**

- **Monday January 24**: Spring Volunteer Fair for anyone interested in the possibility of giving their time to serve others for a few weeks during the summer, a few months, a year or on a regular basis in the student lounge from 4-8 PM.
- **Mondays January 24 & Feb 7**: Social Justice Committee meetings, 6:30-8 PM, room 208.
- **Saturday February 5**: Day long service trip to Down Home Ranch in Elgin TX, a working farm and ranch for people with special needs, 8 AM-5 PM.
- **Sat. Feb. 5 & Sun. Feb 6**: Souper Sunday, Vote for your favorite Super Bowl team with a can of soup at all the weekend masses. Donations will go to the St. Vincent de Paul Society food pantry.

For more info, contact Clotilde at cpichon@aggiecatholic.org or 846-5717.