



Clarifications on Immigration Reform

Statement #4: What are the U.S. Bishops asking for anyway?

The bishops are advocating for specific changes as we look at immigration reform. They are also supportive of any legislation that will move the issue forward. Their position is not partisan. They support whatever legislation could improve our current system. The following are the 5 points the bishops are advocating.

- 1) Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented persons in the country.

A path to citizenship means only a path. It could be a long one or a short one. Good Catholics can argue about what that looks like. The bishops usually talk about an “earned path to citizenship,” that includes paying a fine and back taxes in reparations.

- 2) Preserve family unity as a corner-stone of our national immigration system.

Because the family is more fundamental than the state, the bishops are asking that policies reflect a preference for family, meaning penalties that do not include separating a parents from children. It might also mean streamlining family visas.

- 3) Provide legal paths for low-skilled immigrant workers to come and work in the United States.

The number of visas do not match the demand for low-skilled workers from businesses. Increasing the number of eligible visas would be a solid step in the right direction.

- 4) Restore due process protections to our immigration enforcement policies.

The 1996 immigration reform law placed restrictive judicial mandates on deportation cases. Currently, immigrants who are no risk to the community are held in jail without bail like a high profile murderer. The bishops are asking for greater judicial discretion in individual cases and the elimination of severe punishments like 10 year bans on re-entry.

- 5) Address the root causes (push factors) of migration, such as persecution and economic disparity.

Helping other countries develop their own economies would help reduce immigration. Increases in foreign aid would be one means to do this, as would incentives towards investing in foreign businesses which create jobs there.

- 6) Enforcement

Targeted, proportional and human enforcement of the border is the legitimate role of the U.S. Government. One way to ease the pressure on enforcement is to increase lawful means for immigrating.