



DOMINICAN SISTERS OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

Corporate Stance on Migration

We, the Dominican Sisters of Springfield, IL, express solidarity with those individuals and families who find it necessary to leave their homeland in order to secure their safety and future. We commit to welcome, support, and protect all migrants and advocate for policies that protect their human rights, including family unity.

Rationale/Facts about Migrants: People on the Move

Migrants: Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers

Immigrants

An immigrant is a foreign-born individual residing in another country. Immigrants granted permission to live in the U.S. are known as legal permanent residents. Undocumented immigrants are persons in the country without the permission of the U.S. government, lacking the required paperwork.

Refugees: Refugees are people fleeing armed conflicts or persecution. They cross national borders to seek safety in nearby countries and become recognized as refugees by registering with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). Refugees are protected by international law, specifically the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Asylum Seekers: Asylum allows those who feel their life is in danger to seek refuge in safer countries. Under U.S. and international law, someone who reaches any U.S. border with well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group persecuted by the government or a group the government cannot or will not protect, who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence, may apply for asylum. Once granted asylum, the person is referred to as an asylee.

A refugee and an asylum seeker differ in that an asylum seeker makes their claim after they have stepped foot onto the country where they are seeking refuge, whereas a refugee is granted status while still outside that country.

Three Basic Principles of Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration (www.usccb.org)

First Principle: People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families. This is based on biblical and ancient Christian teaching that the goods of Earth belong to all people. While the right to private property is defended in Catholic social teaching, individuals do not have the right to use private property without regard for the common good. Current citizens do not have superior rights over the immigrant. Before God all are equal. When a person cannot achieve a meaningful life in his or her own land, that person has the right to move.

Second Principle: A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration.

However, those decisions are not to be made out of shortsighted, national self-interest, but with regard for the common good. Ordinarily, people do not leave the security of their own land and culture just to seek adventure in a new place or merely to enhance their standard of living. Instead, they migrate because they are desperate and the opportunity for a safe and secure life does not exist in their own land. Immigrants and refugees endure many hardships and often long for the homes they left behind.

Third Principle: A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

Principles one and two must be understood in the context of principle three. All Catholic social teaching must be understood in light of the absolute equality of all people and the commitment to the common good.

Catholic Social Teaching recognizes that in our modern world where communication and travel are much easier, the burden of emergencies cannot be placed solely on nations immediately adjacent to the crises. Justice dictates that the world community also contribute resources toward shelter, food, medical services, and basic welfare.

As primarily an immigrant nation, we should cherish and celebrate the contributions of immigrants and their cultures.

Pope Francis Statement on our Shared Response to immigrants is that we must welcome, protect, promote, and integrate those who seek refuge within our borders.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDlxlY96ak>

Complexity of U.S. Immigration Policies

There are many areas to be addressed as immigration policy is developed. Some of these to be considered include:

- Government responses to persons coming to the border: ICE raids, separation of families, detention, deportation, lack of legal representation at court proceedings
- Needs of businesses that rely on migrant workers, e.g. agriculture, landscaping, child care, meat and poultry processing plants, etc.
- Reality of undocumented persons already here who are well established, and have contributed, some for decades, as tax payers, business owners, professionals, etc.
- Response to DACA persons (Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals)
- Treatment of undocumented soldiers/veterans and their families
- The billions of dollars being diverted to build a wall at the southern border, and the social, economic, and ecological consequences of the construction
- Recognition and acknowledgement of the impact of our longstanding foreign policies that supported dictators and corrupt governments in order to protect and promote U.S. business interests. These practices have helped create the conditions that eventually cause persons to leave their own land. E.g. NAFTA and selling subsidized corn in Mexico so that traditional farmers can no longer get fair prices for their own corn. Samoza in Nicaragua, Trujillo in Dominican Republic
- The countries, economic status, and faith traditions used as the measure to welcome some immigrants and deny others

Push / Pull Factors (Factors that push persons to leave unsafe conditions or pull them towards greater opportunities)

Push factors

- Safety Factors: Persecution, discrimination, war, widespread gang activity
- Economic Factors: low wages, lack of jobs, trade agreements that diminish livelihoods
- Environmental Factors: Crop failure, drought, pollution of water, air and soil, flooding, fires

Pull Factors

- Social Factors: better opportunities, education, health reasons, reuniting with family

Other Specific Current Concerns

1. Separating families and detention, especially of children, and the subsequent physical and psychological harm
2. The low number of refugees resettled in the U.S.; FY 2020 cap is 18,000, the lowest since the Refugee Act of 1980 established the resettlement program
3. Banning citizens of certain countries from even entering the U.S.
4. Requiring asylum seekers to remain in Mexico while their asylum claim wends its way through the immigration court system
5. Deployment of excessively armed border agents to immigrant-welcoming communities
6. Broader interpretation of *public charge*, reducing the number of people who are eligible for green cards and other visas, by redefining what makes them dependent on government benefits — or “likely” to be in the future
7. Proposed increases in fees for naturalization, DACA renewal, and adjustment of status; institution of a fee for asylum application.