



Resolutions/Statements/Pastoral Letters Issued by the U.S. Bishops' Conference Since 1976

Title: *Resolution on the Pastoral Concern of the Church for People on the Move*

By: National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 11, 1976

Synopsis:

In an age of growing international migration, driven largely by economic globalization, the pastoral concern for migrants must enjoy a special place in the Church's pastoral programs and outreach. "While the pastoral care of the Church is directed to all, it is especially imperative that it be extended to newcomers *driven by political or economic forces to move abroad.*"

"The Church...is required by the Gospel and by its long tradition to promote and defend the human rights and dignity of people on the move, to advocate social remedies to their problems, and to foster opportunities for their spiritual and religious growth."

"We pledge ourselves and urge our brothers and sisters in the Lord to resist injustices against immigrants, to assist them in their need, and to welcome them into our nation and our community of faith as fellow pilgrims on the journey to the Father."

Title: *Resolution on Haitian Refugees*

By: Ad Hoc Committee on Migration and Tourism,

National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: May 2, 1977

Synopsis:

The bishops describe the treatment of Haitians seeking refuge in the United States as encountering "official opposition, hostility, and discrimination." This resolution calls on the U.S. government to cease "all deportation proceedings against Haitian refugees, release all Haitian refugees now imprisoned solely for reasons of immigration, and the granting of amnesty or full refugee rights to all such Haitians now in this country." The resolution also calls on local churches to welcome Haitians and to tend to their pastoral needs.

Title: *Statement on Small-Boat Refugees in Southeast Asia*

By: Administrative Committee, National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: February 16, 1978

Synopsis:

The bishops call on the U.S. government to “respond in a more humane and forceful manner to the tragic situation of small-boat refugees in Southeast Asia...” through more generous offers of refuge in the U.S. The bishops also commit the Church in the U.S. to aid the refugees who are admitted for resettlement.

Title: *Cultural Pluralism in the United States*

By: Committee on Social Development and World Peace,
United States Catholic Conference

Date: April 14, 1980

Synopsis:

Recognizing ever more diversity in the United States, particularly through immigration, the U.S. bishops call for “acceptance and understanding” for all. “We, therefore, summon our Catholic people, and all others as well, to welcome wholeheartedly the new expressions of ethnic diversity, not as a sign of division, but one of recognition of the richness of the American heritage.”

“For the Christian there is no stranger, no one so different in origin or ways that such a one can be set outside of the true human family. We accept men and women for what they are, created and redeemed by God; we accept them as they are, the product of history and culture. In them and through them God’s grace works among us.”

Title: *Resolution on Cuban and Haitian Refugees*

By: U.S. Catholic Conference

Date: May 1980

Synopsis:

The bishops call on the U.S. government to “immediately grant asylum and permanent residence to the boat people of both Cuba and Haiti who are seeking asylum and safety on

our southern shores.” Once again the bishops also commit the Church in the U.S. to assisting in the resettlement of these refugees.

Title: *The Hispanic Presence: Challenge and Commitment*
A Pastoral Letter on Hispanic Ministry

By: National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 12, 1983

Synopsis:

Although much of this pastoral letter focuses on developing and implementing effective strategies and programs for pastoral ministry to the growing Hispanic population in the U.S., the bishops also call on Catholics to be empathetic to the plight of Hispanic immigrants. Recalling the Church’s roots in the immigrant experience, the bishops say, “We are called to appreciate our own histories and to reflect upon the ethnic, racial, and cultural origins which make us a nation of immigrants. Historically, the Church in the United States has been an ‘immigrant Church’ whose outstanding record of care for countless European immigrants remains unmatched. Today that same tradition must inspire in the Church’s approach to recent Hispanic immigrants and migrants a similar authority, compassion, and decisiveness.”

Title: *Resolution on Immigration Reform*

By: National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 14, 1985

Synopsis:

Responding to immigration reform proposals being considered by the U.S. Congress, the bishops voice strong opposition to any reform legislation that does not include a generous legalization program. The bishops further indicate their objection to employer sanction provisions of proposed legislation, unless “legalization is treated as the centerpiece of immigration reform...”

The bishops express criticism of proposed “temporary agricultural worker programs” included in proposed legislation, saying that they “cannot accept any large-scale new program, nor can we accept ‘reforms’ of existing programs whose net effect would be the erosion of protections offered U.S. farm workers and the deterioration of wages, as well as living and working conditions, for all farm workers.”

Title: *Together, A New People/Pastoral Statement on Migrants and Refugees*

By: Administrative Committee, National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 8, 1986

Synopsis:

Acknowledging the history of the United States as a “nation of immigrants” and the growing population of immigrants in contemporary America, the bishops call on U.S. Catholics, who themselves trace their roots to the immigrant experience, to live out the Gospel mandate toward today’s immigrants so as to “welcome the stranger.”

This pastoral statement contains calls to action directed to parishes and dioceses, in particular. It provides suggestions and resources to “encourage the development and growth of [welcoming activities] through creative and flexible initiatives...”

Title: *One Family Under God*

By: Committee on Migration, National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: September 1995

Synopsis:

Pointing to the changing character of immigration in the United States during the previous decade – its diversity and dispersion – and acknowledging the “acrimony and hostility that has become part of the immigration debate,” the bishops attempt to influence the public debate by offering “insights of Catholic social teaching as a springboard for further discussion.”

To contribute to the public policy debate over immigration, *One Family Under God* states that “immigration policy should be designed to enhance and affirm basic protection of human dignity” and identifies five principles that should guide public policy formulation.

The statement also offers comments on specific public policy proposals under discussion and consideration at that time.

Title: *Resolution on Immigration Reform*

By: National Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 16, 2000

Synopsis:

The bishops call upon federal policy makers to “reexamine our immigration laws and enact legislative and administrative reforms which uphold the basic dignity and human rights of immigrants and preserve the unity of the immigrant family.” The bishops were compelled to issue this statement in the aftermath of harmful immigration and welfare reforms enacted in 1996. The statement proposes changes in immigration-related policies in nine areas, including legalization of undocumented, enforcement policies, restoration of due process and other responsive policies toward asylum seekers and other immigrants, restoration of public benefits to needy immigrants, repeal of mandatory detention for certain prospective immigrants, enforcement of workplace rights, reduction of visa backlogs, international economic policies that address root causes, and a religious worker visa program.

Title: *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*
A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

By: United States Catholic Conference

Date: November 2000

Synopsis:

In this major pastoral letter the bishops articulate a vision for a truly welcoming Church toward newcomers in an increasingly diverse society. Using the structure of the Holy Father’s exhortation, *Ecclesia in America*, this statement calls on individual Catholics and on Church organizations to engage in *conversion, communion, and solidarity* so that they can have empathy with and be responsive to the contemporary plight of immigrants.

The bishops state, “Our response to the new immigration ... is informed by a renewed vision of what it is to be Church, and by a new spirituality, informed by the Spirit of Pentecost present in the sacrament of Confirmation, which gives the power to discern the one message of the Kingdom in the diverse customs and languages of our immigrant brothers and sisters.”

Summarizing their vision, the bishop say, “The Church of the twenty-first century will be, as it has always been, a Church of many cultures, languages, and traditions, yet simultaneously one, as God is one – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – unity in diversity.”

Title: *Asian and Pacific Presence: Harmony in Faith*

By: U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: November 2001

Synopsis:

In describing their purpose in writing this pastoral statement, the bishops state, “we Catholic bishops of the United States write this statement to all Catholics and especially to our Asian and Pacific brothers and sisters to recognize and affirm with loving assurance their presence and prominence in the Lord’s house. We pray that this pastoral statement will facilitate a fuller appreciation of their communities in our local churches and will encourage Asian and Pacific Catholics to take on active leadership roles in every level of church life.”

The statement provides a range of concrete pastoral steps that can be taken at every level of the Church to foster the vision articulated.

Title: *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*
A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Bishops of Mexico and the United States

By: Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano and
the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Date: January 2003

Synopsis:

Receiving its inspiration from *Ecclesia in America*, which was promulgated by John Paul II on January 23, 1999, this major pastoral letter, jointly issued by the bishops of Mexico and the United States, is a collaborative effort to deal with the pastoral and public policy challenges impacting migrants in the Americas.

The bishops write that this pastoral statement arises “out of the compassion of the bishops as they experience in their local churches loss of life, family separation and destruction, disappearances of entire villages, racism, and indifference to migrants and immigrants.” The statement brings together Catholic social teachings to bear on this “complex area of life by stressing the dignity of the human person, the rights of migrants, even undocumented migrants, and the importance of family unity.”

The statement contains a series of recommendations for pastoral responses to migrants, both during their journey and in their receiving communities. It also puts forth public policy recommendations designed to improve how the governments of Mexico and the United States treat migrants and respond to their needs.

Prepared June 2007