

**Fall 2022 General Assembly Remarks of  
Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, Chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration**

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Good afternoon, Brothers. While we are gathered together, I have requested this time to update you on three different areas related to the work of the Committee on Migration: Operation Allies Welcome and the resettlement of Afghans; the war in Ukraine, the resulting refugees, and our efforts to assist them; and the status of comprehensive immigration reform.

In September, the large government-led effort to resettle Afghans, which began in July of 2021, came to an end. Over the past year, more than 70,000 Afghans have been relocated to the United States as part of this program. The Conference, through Migration and Refugee Services, has been supporting this effort from the beginning: first, at military bases across the United States; then at the National Conference Center in Leesburg, Virginia; and finally, in close partnership with dozens of Catholic Charities and other community-based organizations providing resettlement in 35 states. MRS hired approximately 175 short-term consultants to work on the program who were joined by hundreds of Catholic Charities staff and volunteers.

Thousands of Afghans participated in one of the legal orientation presentations provided by MRS at the military bases and in Leesburg. This is in addition to the many cultural orientations, driving classes, recreational opportunities, and educational programs for both children and adults overseen by MRS.

Through this operation, the Catholic network has resettled over 13,000 Afghans—more than any other resettlement network—and has helped many more on their way to resettlement.

This has been a tremendous effort for our Church, and we are very grateful to and proud of the many staff, volunteers, dioceses, and organizations, both near and far, that have helped make it a reality. In particular, I would like to recognize and thank Catholic Relief Services, Jesuit Refugee Service, and the many Catholic Charities agencies for their help in providing staff and resources to aid this effort, along with Catholic Charities USA. Further, I am grateful for the assistance provided by CLINIC and a number of legal offices throughout the country.

I would now like to turn to another population that has been at the forefront of our prayers recently. Unfortunately, as Archbishop Gudziak shared this morning, the war in Ukraine continues with intensity. It has resulted in over six million people being displaced inside of the country, as well as almost eight million others who have sought refuge elsewhere in Europe, according to the United Nations.

I have stayed in close contact with Archbishop Gudziak, who has routinely shared updates from his recent travels to the region with me and MRS staff.

As part of the Administration's commitment to welcome 100,000 Ukrainians to the United States, the government began its Uniting for Ukraine initiative in April 2022 to provide Ukrainians displaced by the war with an opportunity to come to the United States temporarily.

Since then, applications have been filed for over 150,000 individuals and over 75,000 people have arrived in the United States through the program.

Because this model is distinct from the Refugee Admissions Program, MRS has launched a pilot program in four cities—Philadelphia, Boston, Cleveland, and Seattle—to support those who are sponsoring Ukrainians and help connect Ukrainians themselves with services for which they're eligible. I am grateful to Cardinal O'Malley, Archbishop Perez, Archbishop Etienne, and Bishop Malesic for supporting this initiative in their dioceses.

With winter upon us and significant damage to infrastructure in Ukraine, the number of people seeking safety is rising. On November 1st, Archbishop Gudziak and I sent an urgent letter to each of you, asking every diocese in the United States to sponsor at least one Ukrainian family. I am especially thankful to Bishop Vasquez of Austin for his responsiveness to this appeal.

Echoing Archbishop Gudziak's words from earlier today, I ask you to open your hearts to our brothers and sisters in Ukraine and to encourage the faithful of your dioceses to do the same. Let us, as the Church in the United States, be messengers of Christ's love in this way. More information is available at the website provided in our letter to you.

Now, I would like to provide you with an update on the status of comprehensive immigration reform.

Throughout my time as chairman of the Committee on Migration, comprehensive immigration reform has been a top priority, especially during these last two years, when it was expected that we would have the best opportunity in quite some time to make progress on this priority.

Unfortunately, while we have had some successes, such as passage of the American Dream and Promise Act and the Farm Workforce Modernization Act by the House in March 2021 and other incremental changes, we have not yet been able to achieve a comprehensive reform of our immigration system, which as you all know is so needed.

Following last week's midterm elections, the prospects of a comprehensive immigration reform in the next Congress will continue to depend heavily on a bipartisan agreement. And that is something we as a Church must continue to support whenever possible.

Millions will continue to live in the shadows without legal status, family members will remain separated, the most vulnerable will suffer, disorder will continue at the border, and the very future of our country will hang in the balance without a functioning immigration system.

In the final weeks of this Congress, we do have a number of specific outstanding priorities, including the Afghan Adjustment Act, permanent relief for Dreamers, a reform of the agricultural guest worker program, and anti-trafficking legislation.

I ask you to join in prayer, advocacy, and accompaniment, together with your state conferences, in support of these efforts. With so much polarization and uncertainty in our country, dear Brothers, our collective voice on these issues is needed now more than ever.