



Ten Years

of Pastoral Visits to
Migrant Workers

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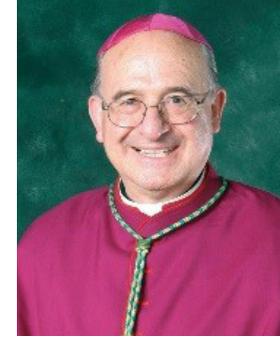
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Foreward: From the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

In recent times more than in the past, immigration has become one of the major issues about which everyone in our country is concerned. The Church, on her part, considers it a moral imperative to express her concerns and seek avenues toward addressing the challenges and difficulties confronting immigrants into the United States.

I am pleased to present the “Ten Years of Pastoral Visits to Migrant Workers” report. This report is sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church, Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers. This report brings together the successful stories and recommendations that will help support the ministry to migrant farmworkers. The various dioceses visited made significant suggestions, recommendations, and pastoral action plans, and proposed structures that, if implemented, will help in creating awareness and the need for pastoral outreach but also immigration reform.

I hope this report will be a means for you to discover the various ministries to the migrant workers and their families and hopefully inspire a coordinated approach to serve the needs of the migrant workers. Also, I hope you will find this resource helpful as you live out and manifest the universality of the Catholic Church in rich and positive ways.

I thank Bishop John Manz, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the episcopal liaison to the migrant farmworkers, and Sr. Myrna Tordillo, MSCS, past Assistant Director of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees & Travelers, for the pastoral visits to the migrant farmworkers and for their continued support. I thank Joyce Duriga, editor of the Archdiocese of Chicago newspaper, and the various people who helped us to make the, “Ten Years of Pastoral Visits to Migrant Workers” report possible. The participation of the various dioceses was vital to the success of these pastoral visits. I commend the migrant farmworkers in the various geographic areas visited for their deep faith and hard work. The reports explain the various

needs and how the Church can be involved in responding with the complexity of situations and immigration law.

I pray that the findings will prompt Catholics and others to seek ways to work with the migrant farmworkers. I hope you will enjoy reading this report and that you will find it helpful in your various ministries. This publication has been prepared by the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church \ Pastoral, Care of Migrants, Refugees, & Travelers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rutilio J. del Riego".

Most Reverend Rutilio J. del Riego
Chairman, Subcommittee on Pastoral Care
of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers



Introduction: Letter from the Episcopal Liaison to the Migrant Farm Workers

For more than ten years, I have had the privilege to travel on behalf of the

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to meet, talk with, and celebrate the sacraments with migrant farmworkers all across the United States.

Through the years, we have been north, south, east, and west. The faces may change, along with the type of work they do, but what remains the same is that each person is a child of God who needs to know that God—and his Church—are there for them.

We originally started out visiting migrant farmworkers who would stay in one place for a season and then return to their home countries. In more recent years, our visits have morphed into a ministry to rural immigrant communities. The growth of big processing centers, whether for dairy or meat, has enabled immigrants to stay in one place for longer periods.

These processing centers draw the immigrant community because it is usually dirty

work, it is not high paying, and there is a great need for it. On these trips, I spend a lot of time listening to the people and hearing their personal stories of working in the fields or in the plants.

Migrant or undocumented immigrant workers live in a constant state of fear that they will get picked up and be deported. They come here because they need the money, but they would most likely rather be at home.

That is the famous push-pull factor. The pull is, “Hey, there are jobs there.” The push is, “Hey, we got nothing here so we can’t lose anything by going up there.” The workers face dangerous working conditions, deportation, abuse by bosses, and exploitation by shady lawyers or officials who take advantage of their language barrier or ignorance of American law. And that’s just when they get across the border.

It is a humanitarian crisis. There has to be concern for what is going on because it affects us, and we are involved in it because we’re benefitting from the work these migrants are doing.

I hope that reading through this booklet will give you a glimpse of the life of immigrant and migrant workers in this country and that your awareness will increase both of the need for immigration reform and that we all must work to help these our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Sincerely,

Bishop John Manz
Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago
Liaison to the Migrant Community on
Behalf the United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops



Invitation: Letter from the Executive Director of Cultural Diversity in the Church

Dear friend,
Around the United States hun-

dreds of thousands of farmers and farmworkers work hard every day to put food on our tables. Some work in the fields, planting and harvesting; others are herders, and numerous others are employed at meat, poultry, hog, dairy and fresh produce farms as well as processing and packing plants.

Many of these workers are migrant families and individuals who move seasonally from place to place to fill essential agricultural jobs. Among these migrants, vast numbers of them are immigrants arrived from other countries. These workers provide key services to many U.S. industries. They often work long hours in very harsh conditions for menial pay. The limited number of visas available versus the demand for workers, as well as bureaucratic delays in visa processing in an industry so dependent on seasonal workers, has left many of them with no option but to remain undocumented. If the life of a migrant farmworker, by the nature of the work, is often arduous, undocumented immigrants are especially

vulnerable to abuse and exploitation due to their irregular situation.

Hearing the call of the Lord to be compassionate and merciful with the stranger, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35), the Church feels compelled to minister to these brothers and sisters both in their pastoral and physical needs. She accompanies them to strengthen them in their faith, listens to their needs and advocates for dignified and just working, living and social conditions.

The Catholic Church in general, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in particular, has a long history of ministering to people on the move and welcoming and integrating immigrants. The USCCB Committee and Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church particularly is charged with the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers.

I am pleased to introduce to you the report Ten Years of Pastoral Visits to Migrant Workers, 2003-2013. In it you will find windows to the lives of migrants and the realities they face in different industries and parts of the country, seen through the eyes of the episcopal liaison for migrants and the teams that have accompanied the bishops in

these annual pastoral visits. You will have a glimpse at what some local dioceses, parishes and organizations are doing to assist as well as some recommendations.

We share these stories with you in hopes that each of these vignettes will encourage pastoral outreach and provoke reflection: What is my local community of faith doing to heed the plight of migrants in our midst? We hope you can find in them inspiration and ideas for your own ministry. I invite you to join us in sowing the good seed of the Gospel on the fertile ground of the life and faith of our migrant brothers and sisters.

Respectfully,

Mrs. Mar Muñoz-Visoso, MTS
Executive Director, Secretariat of Cultural
Diversity in the Church
United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops



History: A Message from the Previous Assistant Director of Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

The first episcopal liaison to migrant farmworker ministry appointed by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration was Bishop Thomas Daily of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. In August 1991, Bishop Daily visited the Diocese of Fresno and the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio. The visits were arranged with the collaboration of the bishops' office of Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, the diocese's Hispanic ministry office, and the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network.

Bishop Daily's pastoral visits were occasions to get to know the ministry to migrant farmworkers by meeting with pastoral agents and with farmworkers in the fields and parishes, visiting entities that provided social and immigration services to migrants, and meeting with the local bishops and concelebrating Mass with them in the presence of migrant farmworker communities.

Since then, succeeding episcopal liaisons have made pastoral visits to various dioceses in the country. During their visits, they were informed about the agricultural reality in the field, fruit orchard, nursery, dairy farm, food processing plant, meat packing plant, etc.

They also provided direct pastoral care to migrant farmworkers and encouraged those who work with or provide pastoral outreach to migrant farmworkers. Likewise, the episcopal liaison would give a report to the relevant committee of bishops.

The Catholic Church has long been concerned about the dignity of work and the rights of workers, in particular those who labor in agriculture. For more than 100 years, the popes' encyclicals and various documents from episcopal conferences assert the dignity and rights of those who work. St. John Paul II reminds us, "The world of agriculture, which provides society with the goods it needs for its daily sustenance, is of *fundamental importance*. . . . Agricultural work involves considerable

difficulties, including unremitting and sometimes exhausting physical effort and a lack of appreciation on the part of society, to the point of making agricultural people feel that they are social outcasts" (Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens* [USCCB: Washington, DC, 1981], no. 21).

He adds, "the right to work can be infringed when the farm workers are denied the possibility of sharing in decisions concerning their services, or when they are denied the right to free association with a view to their just advancement socially, culturally and economically" (no. 21).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops affirms, "Farmworkers have been among the most visible concerns of our Conference. We renew the commitment to lift up their situation and to work to improve their lives and those of their families. They are among the most vulnerable and exploited people in our land. Their situation demands a response from people of faith" (USCCB,

Catholic Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers [USCCB: Washington, DC, 2003], See online: <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture-nutrition-rural-issues/for-i-was-hungry-catholic-agenda-for-action-part-2.cfm>).

The Church's pastoral concern for farmworkers has been articulated concretely in the context of the times, through various programs, activities, and pastoral outreach. Pastoral visits of episcopal liaisons to migrant farmworkers in different parts of the country are examples of the pastoral solicitude and commitment of the bishops.

Twenty-two years later, the reports of the episcopal liaison visits to migrant farmworker ministries around the country have provided insightful information and offered recommendations on ways to promote migrant farmworker outreach nationally and to the dioceses visited.

The Office of Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers of the USCCB/ Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church is very grateful to the episcopal liaisons for their generosity of time and their commitment over the years to bring God's love to migrant farmworkers and those who serve them.

A special thanks goes to Bishop John Manz of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the current episcopal liaison, who has served the longest in that capacity. We gratefully acknowledge the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network for sending its executive director or its representative to participate in the episcopal liaison pastoral visits all these years.

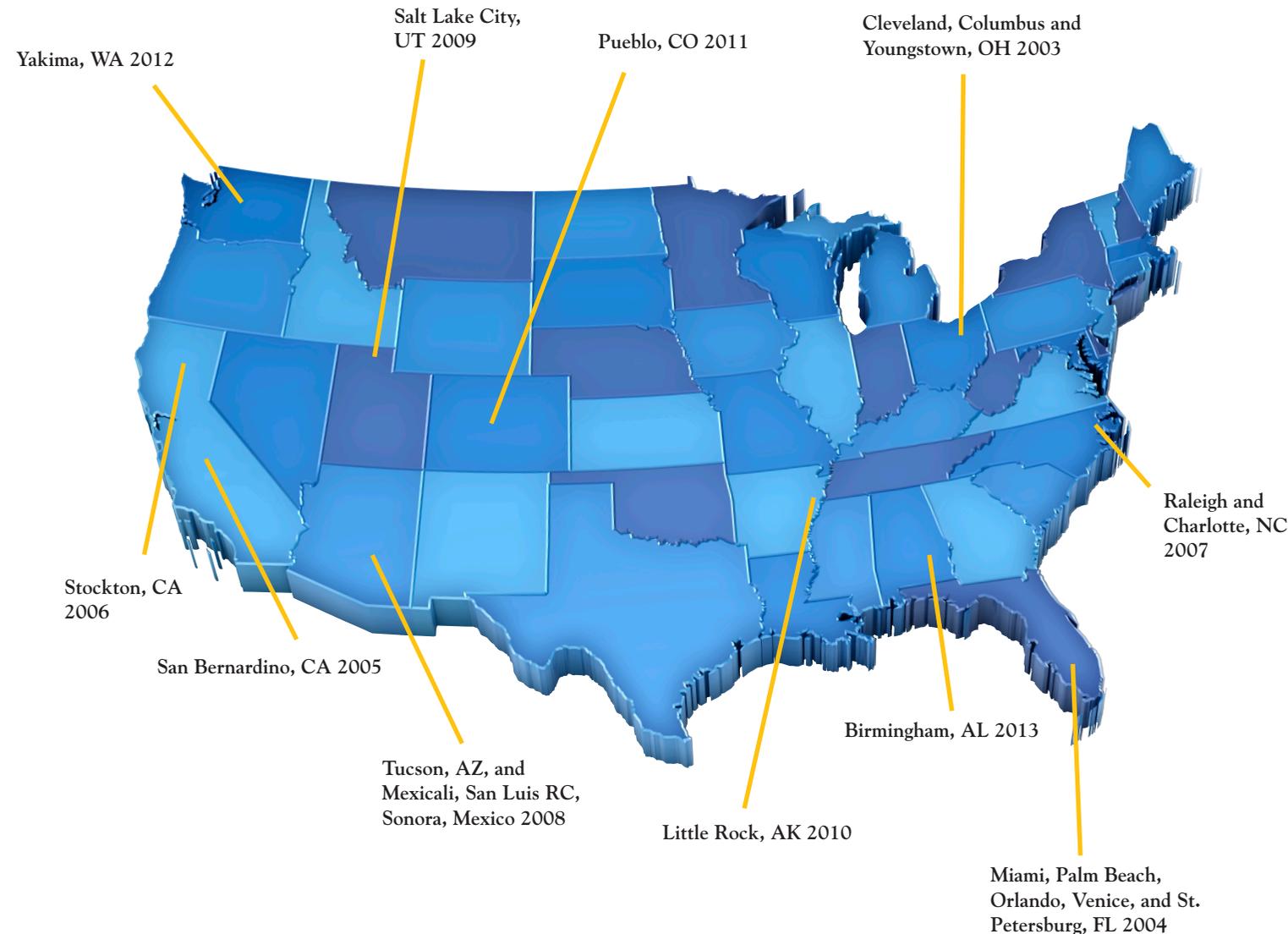
The visits in this report are from 2003-2014. Thanks also to Joyce Duriga, who accompanied the 2013 episcopal liaison to the Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama, to cover the visit for Catholic News Service and the

Archdiocese of Chicago.

With peace,

Sr. Myrna Tordillo
Former Assistant Director,
Pastoral Care of Migrants,
Refugees, & Travelers, Secretariat of
Cultural Diversity in the Church
United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops

Map of Pastoral Visits by Diocese



August 22-25, 2003: Dioceses of Cleveland, Columbus, and Youngstown, Ohio

The team celebrated Mass, visited and dialogued with workers and migrant ministry pastoral leaders, and met leaders involved with the Tri-Diocesan Immigrant Worker Project at Centro San Jose in Canton.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Workers in these areas are involved in a variety of agricultural labor along with working in poultry plants and on dairy farms.
- In 2001, the bishops in Ohio issued “God’s Welcoming Presence: A Call to Stand in Solidarity with Ohio’s Immigrants.”
- The farmworkers have difficulty obtaining drivers’ licenses, have limited access to prenatal care and translation services for pregnant migrant women, lack health care benefits and services at their jobs, have no transportation to Catholic parishes, and experience inappropriate educational

placement of their children in special education classes.

- The area bishops supported the growing Hispanic community in their dioceses and hired a religious sister to coordinate pastoral outreach to the migrant communities across the tri-diocesan area. There was strong commitment and collaboration among the staff and volunteers of the Tri-Diocesan Immigrant Worker Project as well as in the parishes working with them in the three dioceses.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Spanish-speaking priests are needed to provide for the celebration of the sacraments and pastoral outreach with the workers and their families who are people of deep faith.
- There is a need for affordable immigration legal services.
- There is a need for training for parish communities to implement locally the pastoral letter *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us* and the joint pastoral letter of the Mexican and U.S. Episcopal Conferences *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*; along with a strong Spanish-language evangelization.
- The Tri-Diocesan Immigrant Worker Project could expand to include the Diocese of Steubenville.

October 31–November 4, 2004: Archdiocese of Miami, Dioceses of Palm Beach, Orlando, St. Petersburg, and Venice, Florida

It was the first time in the fourteen-year history of the annual episcopal liaison visit with farmworkers that the visit was made in the state of Florida and was coordinated in conjunction with the state Catholic Conference. The team visited farmworker camps destroyed by Hurricane Andrew ten years earlier and rebuilt in the Homestead area south of Miami; farmworkers and their families; clergy and lay leaders involved in ministry to migrant farmworkers and their families; a worker camp; St. Mary Parish in Pahokee greenhouses.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Hurricane Charley, which at the time was the second costliest hurricane ever, was a special focus on the 2004 trip.
- Time was spent both before and after this observance with Sr.

Cathy Gorman, SNDdeN, Sr. Ann Kendrick, SNDdeN, and their staff at the Office for Farmworker Ministry in Apopka, which they cofounded in 1971. Afterward, a luncheon meeting

was held at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Apopka with priests of the Orlando diocese involved in Hispanic ministry.

- The executive director of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of St.



Petersburg led the group on a tour of the San Jose Mission complex.

- The final days of the pastoral visit were spent in the Diocese of Venice, beginning at the Coalition of Immokalee Workers office. Lucas Benitez led a tour of some of the housing controlled by a slum landlord in the area and the site of the future center for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.
- A dinner meeting was held at Guadalupe Social Services, located at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, with the local pastoral leaders. An outdoor Mass under a tent followed, with farmworkers and their families from the area around Immokalee.

Mass was concelebrated with Bishop Priamo Tejada, retired bishop of Baní, Dominican Republic.

- The visit concluded on November 4 at Resurrection of Our Lord Catholic Church in Fort Myers. The morning was dedicated to meetings and discussions with government representatives, legislators, and the media about what Bishop Manz saw and heard over the past four days and to identifying priorities for the future in farmworker ministry pastoral care and advocacy. Representative Michael Davis, who serves Eastern Collier and Western Broward Counties, attended this meeting as well as David Nolan and two farmworker specialists from

the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. This department is responsible for enforcement in the agricultural industry around farmworker labor and transportation issues.

- It is hoped that the focus on migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families in five of the seven dioceses of Florida during the 2004 episcopal liaison visit will stimulate greater support for pastoral outreach, particularly in rural areas, and for beneficial policy and workplace changes benefiting farmworkers and their families in the state of Florida.

October 6-10, 2005: Diocese of San Bernardino, California

The visit was based in the lower desert of the Coachella Valley. This is a geographic area of great economic contrasts, from very wealthy residents to migrant agricultural workers and those who live on Native American reservations.

The itinerary included visits with organizations providing direct services to migrant farmworkers and their families, meetings with rural migrant ministry pastoral leaders, and visits with local Catholic migrant communities in seven trailer parks in the area of Mecca, California.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Catholic Charities of the San Bernardino diocese operates a food distribution site in Mecca that began in 2004 and is run primarily by volunteers who meet early in the morning to prepare bags of food for migrant families in the Lower Desert. People begin lining up early to receive bags for their families.

- The team visited a field where workers were harvesting eggplants and packing them for shipment. They also visited grape vineyards, lemon orchards, a packing plant that prepares grapefruit for shipment to Japan, and a date farm.
- The farmworkers and their families desire a place to meet in their local communities; catechesis for children, youth, and adults; programs that can respond to their social and educational needs; day care facilities for working mothers; better schools for their children; responses to abusive treatment due to racism and discrimination; affordable health care; immigration legal services; and ongoing advocacy initiatives.
- Conditions in the trailer parks varied. It was evident that the majority of the small faith communities were well established.
- The pastoral leaders initially spend most of their time responding to the basic needs of the people. Afterward, they respond to their spiritual and evangelization needs. Pastoral

RECOMMENDATIONS

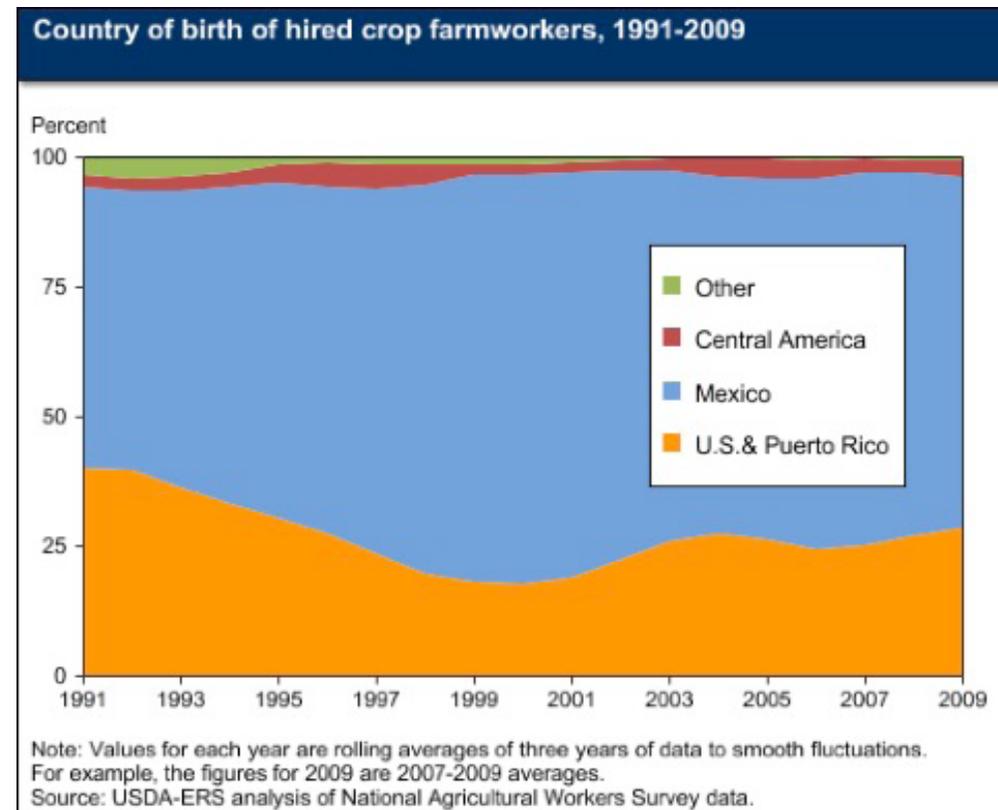
- Leadership formation and pastoral accompaniment is essential with adults but also with the youth who are living in two worlds.
- Assessment is needed of the future impact on agriculture and the trailer parks in the Coachella Valley as more people move to this area.
- Lay leaders can do many things, but it is important for priests to accompany them and provide spiritual formation of the lay pastoral leaders.
- The relationship between migrant ministry pastoral leaders and priests in the local parish needs to be strengthened.
- Conditions in the trailer parks are worsening; there is a great need for a social justice response.
- The diocese needs alternative local pastoral leadership formation courses because not everyone has access to current courses.

services are needed onsite because many of the people do not have access to transportation to go to the parish church in Mecca or are afraid of the local immigration agents, police, and drug traffickers.

- Maintenance at the parks varied. Desert Home Park, also known as Los Duros, is located on a Native American reservation and is therefore not subject to the same housing regulations as those located on land in the County of Riverside. It is located next to a dump where unlawful burning takes place, exposing the trailer park residents to harmful fumes. Near this camp is where Sister Gabi Williams has worked with local leaders to prepare the site for a future family learning center.
- Paseo de los Heroes has its own community center and was developed by local housing organizations.



Country of Birth of Hired Crop Farmworkers, 1991-2009



October 19-22, 2006: Diocese of Stockton, California

The itinerary included visits with nongovernmental, including Catholic, organizations providing direct social, legal, and healthcare services for migrants and their families; local Catholic migrant communities in five housing camps; a parish that has an outreach mission to migrant camps; a harvesting crew in a tomato farm, dialogues with rural migrant ministry pastoral leaders, and an ocular tour of some of the farms and dairy ranches where the migrants work.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Stockton is changing and growing. There are 1.1 million people in the Diocese of Stockton, and it is estimated that 19 percent (223,350) are Catholics; of that, 50 percent are of Hispanic/Latino origins. There are an average of 76,000 migrant and seasonal farmworkers who live and work within the diocese's boundaries. More than 70 percent of these workers are Catholics. The population of Stockton is increasing

because of an influx of families from San Francisco and Oakland looking for more affordable housing.

- Decent, affordable housing for migrants is extremely rare. Good farmlands are lost to housing projects. Agricultural jobs have decreased due to mechanization and closure of asparagus farms impacted by competition with Central American countries. Fewer migrant workers seem to come to Stockton.
- The number of families below the poverty line is increasing in the diocese, and environmental degradation has brought numerous health problems to the population, including the migrant families.
- Most direct services (social, legal, and healthcare) are provided by nongovernmental organizations and are partially or fully funded by government grants. These services are available only to clients (including migrant farmworkers) who have legal documents. While these agencies are legally bound to serve only documented immigrants,

sometimes they provide undocumented migrants with information and referral services. Undocumented migrants generally have nowhere to go for legal, medical, and other social services except to faith-based organizations.

- The Diocese of Stockton has a special migrant ministry structure. A team of four pastoral ministers directs the care that is delivered through three host parishes, which have missions to migrant communities in worker camps. The part-time diocesan coordinator directs the ministry and is responsible for developing and implementing the diocesan "Plan de Evangelización en La Pastoral Migrante," in collaboration with the staff team and local volunteer migrant leaders.
- Three religious sisters are assigned to three different host parishes (Sacred Heart, St. George, and St. Mary). They provide full-time outreach ministry to the migrant worker communities within the parish territories. Migrant ministry

also works closely with the diocesan offices for Hispanics, Religious Education, Youth Ministry, and Escuela de Ministerios.

- Documented and undocumented migrant farmworkers endure difficult living and working conditions. These range from a lack of decent housing to subhuman housing conditions, lack of medical care, lack of adequate legal aid, a constant threat of pick up and deportation by immigration authorities, and the demands from “coyotes” and *contratistas* (crew leaders) who often extort money.
- Primary needs of the farmworkers and their families identified by the people and the pastoral workers during these visits include:

— Legal aid services for victims of abusive labor practices, racism, and discrimination, and for immigration matters, especially for the undocumented who currently have nowhere to go for help; healthcare services for the uninsured; better housing, especially for the single men; information and referral to services that respond to social and educational needs

— Where possible, regular Sunday Mass on site (Sacred Heart Mission), because migrants do not have transportation to go to the parish church; continued catechesis and English-language classes on site; access to safe ways to transfer money

to Mexico and Guatemala; vibrant youth and young adult ministry, including cultural and social adjustment counseling with youth who are straddling two worlds; continued leadership formation for the local pastoral leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The diocese should look into a collaborative legal-aid program to respond to the dire need of the numerous victims of labor abuse, discrimination, and racism.
- The diocese has a very good model of ministry with migrant farmworkers that can be replicated in other dioceses. The Diocese of Stockton Migrant Ministry Pastoral Plan is in place. The diocese has also published an expansive directory of important information and a list of organizations in the San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties that provide assistance to farmworkers. This may be an opportune time to evaluate the stability of all current parish missions and expand the migrant ministry to areas still not reached.
- The diocesan migrant ministry team should explore how the ministry designed for evangelization can include direct services to respond to social needs, like on-site English languages classes, and on-site information about education and healthcare. In collaboration with the host parishes, the migrant ministry team should explore how to expand regular on-site celebration of Masses and outreach programs for youth and young adults.
- The diocesan migrant ministry team should explore the possibility of regional and interdiocesan coordination of ministry to migrant workers and their families with the neighboring Dioceses of Fresno, Monterey, Sacramento, and Oakland. A more coordinated regional approach and sharing of resources may yield more efficient and effective responses to common needs and issues.

Oct. 22-27, 2007: Dioceses of Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina

The team visited parishes with outreach to migrant farmworkers; dialogued with pastoral leaders, parishioners, and community organizers; visited homes of two parishioner migrant families in a trailer park (one, a young husband taking care of five children while the wife is in ICE detention, and the other, a family with a member who was arrested, deported, and later returned to the family in Red Springs); visited with religious leaders and the Industrial Areas Foundation network for community building and empowerment; visited a sweet potato farm and packing facility; toured a turkey processing plant, Christmas tree farm, and wreath factories; and visited a migrant camp.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- North Carolina ranks sixth in the nation in number of migrant farmworkers, with approximately 150,000 workers and their dependents each growing

season. Ninety-four percent are native Spanish speakers, and roughly half are undocumented.

- Major crops requiring hand labor include tobacco, Christmas trees, sweet potatoes, strawberries, and blueberries. Many farmworkers also work in greenhouses and nurseries. North Carolina boasts some of the largest chicken, turkey, and hog processing plants in the country, which employ large numbers of Hispanics who labor in very difficult working conditions. Market demands have created a significant shift to cotton farming in the past eight years.
- In the Diocese of Raleigh, registered Catholics number 188,000, which is 4.6 percent of the population. This figure may not include those who come from Mexico or Central and South America. The diocesan Office of Hispanic Ministry coordinates pastoral care to migrant farmworkers and their families through host parishes that have missions to migrant communities in worker camps.

- The Diocese of Charlotte has a total population of 4.5 million, and 124,000 are Catholic. However, this number does not include an estimated 148,000 unregistered Hispanic/Latino Catholics. The diocese is a model for Hispanic ministry, especially in outreach services to migrant farmworkers. The director of Hispanic ministries oversees the pastoral work of ten vicariate coordinators in collaboration with forty-six parishes and many volunteers.
- The Charlotte diocese has a \$600,000 annual budget for Hispanic ministry, which is exceptional. The third pastoral plan for Hispanic ministry is being developed and includes evangelization and missionary options to newly arrived people, immigrants, and other disadvantaged groups.
- The migration influx experienced in many areas is a result of migrants searching for work and retired people from other states lured by lower costs of living.

- In an agricultural shift, there are at least twenty-seven vineyards in what used to be tobacco fields.
- There is a pervading fear among migrant farmworkers caused by increasing crackdowns and raids in the worksite, trailer homes, and streets. In some cities, however, it was reported that local police openly declare they will not engage in immigration enforcement. Local community organizers and parish groups are educating the migrants about their rights and what to do in case of raids and arrests.
- Services for legal, social, and medical care are extended by nongovernmental entities, including Catholic organizations, with referrals to appropriate agencies for specific needs.
- Most migrant farmworkers live in substandard housing conditions that include overcrowding and inadequate food

storage and bathroom facilities. Break-ins by robbers is common, and gangs prey on neighborhoods.

- Migrant farmworkers are often subject to labor and wage exploitation and have few protections. While documented farmworkers come to North Carolina under the H-2A program,

which allows foreign guest workers to perform seasonal farm work under a temporary visa, these legal farmworkers are not covered by medical insurance and have to pay out of pocket for care. Most vulnerable are the undocumented who suffer more abusive living and working conditions and cannot report

these for fear of retaliation, arrest, or deportation.

- In meatpacking plants, safety issues include repetitive motion injuries that lead to systematic denial of workers' compensation when workers are injured. Additionally, the "no-match letters" indicating discrepancies between the names and Social Security

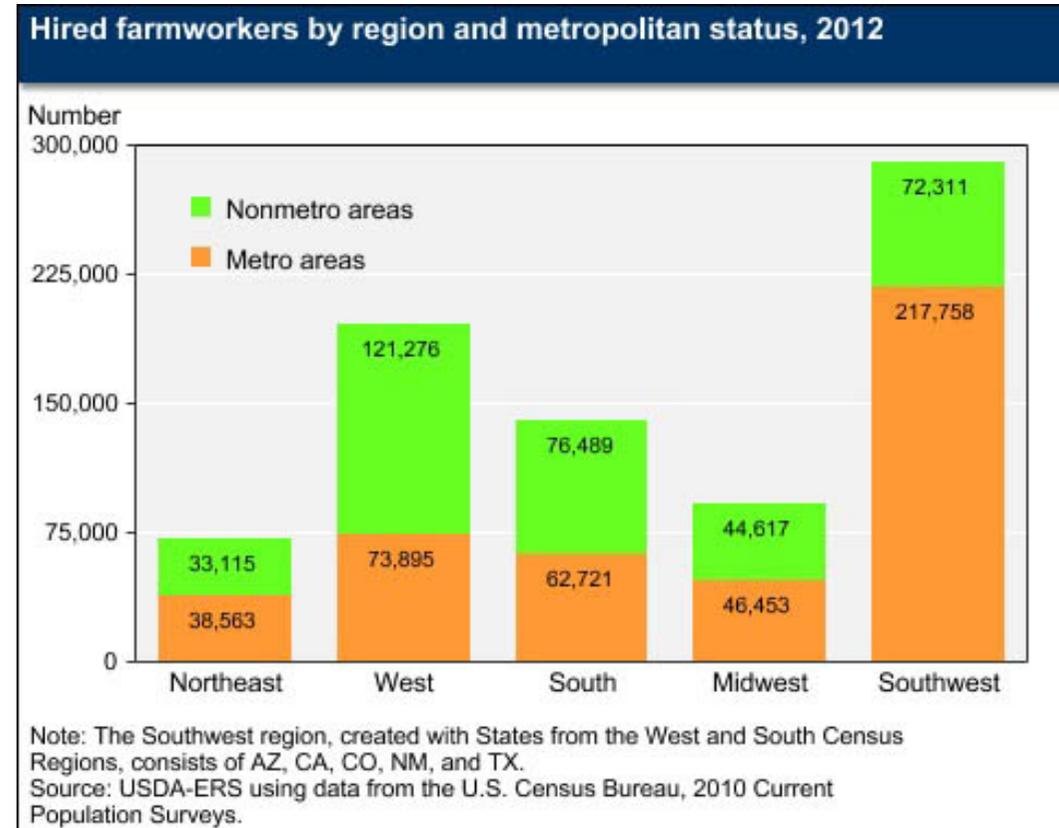
numbers workers furnished to the company found many workers systematically fired. Some have moved out of state to other "safer" places.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Workers requested bilingual priests, not only to celebrate Mass but also for other sacraments and counseling; Hispanic deacons; more formation courses for migrants and their families; leadership formation for parish pastoral leaders; access to information and legal services, especially on labor and immigration issues; education about human rights; transportation to and from work, Mass, and shopping; better housing conditions; and quality, affordable, and safe housing.
- Explore the possibility of a "priest exchange program," e.g., Spanish-speaking priests who study in Rome can help in parishes in North Carolina during summer vacations.
- Explore ways to make legal aid more available, especially on labor, wage, and immigration matters for migrant farmworkers.
- Increase dialogue, acceptance, and understanding in parishes with Hispanics and non-Hispanics so that all recognize the gift each one brings to the church.
- The Diocesan Hispanic Ministry, in its tasks of evangelization and mission, should explore more ways to expand outreach programs and social services to migrant farmworkers.

Hired Farmworkers by Region and Metropolitan Status, 2012



December 3-7, 2008: Diocese of Tucson, Arizona, and Diocese of Mexicali, San Luis RC, Sonora, Mexico

The team met with produce growers, farm labor contractors, lobbyists in Arizona and California's Imperial Valley; migrant ministry pastoral leaders; parishioners and community organizers; and organizations providing direct legal, social, and healthcare services or referrals. The team visited two lettuce farms and a cauliflower field.

The team also visited Friendship Park for the 14th Annual Día del Campesino (Farmworker Appreciation Day), a community fair that provides free breakfast, medical services, information, and referrals to over 4,500 farmworkers and family members.

In San Luis, RC, Sonora, Mexico, the team visited Centro Independiente de Trabajadores Agrícolas (CITA), which is a Catholic Relief Services-funded, grassroots, farmworker community organization that responds to the needs and problems of agricultural workers and employers. They visited the homes of migrant farmworkers who travel daily to and from Yuma for work, leaving their children in the care of family members or hired persons.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- There are 20,000 farms in Arizona growing vegetables such as lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, and spinach, and fruits like melons, oranges, and dates. Farms also grow cotton and wheat. There are 175,000 acres of irrigated land in the Yuma region with the Colorado River as the source.
- The Yuma fresh-produce industry supplies more than 90 percent of the lettuce sold in the United States during November through January. In the San Luis and Yuma area, there are between 15,000 to 18,000 workers who travel over the border to work each day. The border crossing takes several hours and workers often have to start at 2 a.m. or 4 a.m. to be on the bus by 5 a.m.
- As border security and enforcement of immigration laws tightened in past years, disruptions in the daily availability of labor has caused major financial losses to produce farmers in the industry.
- While there are good farm growers and farm labor contractors, there are also those who exploit undocumented workers in many ways, such as wage cheating, nonpayment or underpayment of worker's compensation, and violation of worker protection laws. Document and notary services fraud is common on the Mexico side.
- The majority of farms in Yuma are family owned, with the exception of a few large corporations. Arizona passed the Employer Sanctions Law that imposes large fines for growers and employers found employing undocumented or falsely documented laborers.
- Farm growers and labor contractors are using the H-2A work visas to get workers to fill the gaps for undocumented workers. However, there have been complaints that

the Department of Labor often does not act in a timely fashion to process applications, which have to go to several other federal agencies, such as the DHS, before workers are processed by the consulate. There have been many glitches through which workers were not approved

- Under the H-2A program, farm growers are required to provide approved housing to H-2A workers. Because the majority of workers go back daily to Mexico, the housing provided on the U.S. side is not used, and many have gone dilapidated, at least in Yuma County.
- The average age of the farmworker is forty-five. The next generation is going on to college and not choosing agricultural work. A critical



shortage of farmworkers will have an inevitable impact on the availability and, consequently, the prices of fresh winter produce from Yuma County. In the past, during a severe labor shortage, it was said that marines from Yuma's Marine Corps Air Station volunteered to help bring in the cantaloupe harvest, but it took them longer to do the work. The farmworkers are professionals who are used to the kind of hard work necessary in the fields.

- Through the Manos Unidas Project, Catholic Relief Services Mexico and the Catholic Social Mission office of the Diocese of Tucson established CITA, a binational grassroots farmworker organization that extends services in response to the challenges and needs in the agricultural industry. CITA is a cooperative temporary employment agency operated in both countries and has

- the basic functions of recruiting and screening Mexican farmworkers; preparing and filing seasonal H-2A worker applications with selected family farm employers; guiding selected workers through passport and visa processes; orienting and training workers; and placing workers with employers who sign a fair treatment code of conduct.
- Services for legal, social, and medical care are extended by nongovernmental entities, including Catholic and ecumenical organizations such as SABOR. Services include information on job assistance, worker's rights, ESL classes, ID cards, driver's licenses, immigration, interpretation services, and others.

- Local parishes in both the Dioceses of Tucson and Mexicali extend spiritual care, referrals, and direct social outreach to migrant farmworkers.
- The farmworkers expressed desire for the following:
 - Speedy border inspection for workers so as not to lose time to and from work
 - Better communication of immigration information, advocacy, and legal rights
 - More collective transportation to and from work

- Access to water, bathrooms, and sanitary conditions during work, along with decreased exposure to pesticides
- Bilingual priests for sacraments as well as counseling
- Continuing leadership formation for parish pastoral leaders
- Access to information and legal services, especially on labor and immigration issues
- Education about their human rights and migrants rights

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Dioceses of Tucson and Mexicali can encourage and engage more farm owners, growers and farm labor contractors on both sides to work toward a balance between the best conditions for workers and the sustainability for producers.
- Both dioceses can enhance the resources to pursue goals that will benefit farmworkers such as education and workers' rights.



September 21-23, 2009: Diocese of Salt Lake City, Utah

The team visited parishes with outreach to migrant farmworkers, rural immigrants, and their families and held listening sessions with pastors, ministry leaders, and parishioners in two parishes and a mission. The group also visited organizations providing direct legal, social, and healthcare services or referrals; Catholic Community Services of the Diocese of Salt Lake City; Holy Cross Ministries (sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Salt Lake City); a turkey processing plant in Moroni City where 99 percent of the workers are Hispanic; and the Utah Refugee Services Office.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Utah has an area of nearly 85,000 square miles and an estimated population of 2.78 million. The majority of Utah's residents are Mormons, or members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The top agricultural products are beef cattle and calves, dairy products, hogs, hay, and greenhouse products.

Wool, honey, and turkeys also contribute to the economy. Hay, Utah's largest crop, is grown to feed beef and dairy cattle. Petroleum and copper are the most valuable mined products, and natural salts are produced from the Great Salt Lake. Migrants work more in "near green agriculture," such as dairy farms. Rural immigrants are working more often in the service sector because of demand.

- The Diocese of Salt Lake City covers the state of Utah. In 2009, Catholics numbered over 50,000, and there are sixty-three parishes and missions and seventeen Catholic schools. Well over 70 percent of Catholics in the diocese are Hispanics. Due to the vast geographical spread and the lack of priests, Mass is only celebrated once a month in remote rural parishes. On other Sundays, a deacon, religious, or lay minister conducts Communion services.
- More refugees are being resettled in Utah and are being hired more

often over migrants and rural immigrants for work in meat processing, packing plants, and in the service industry, because they have legal immigration status.

- In many cities, local police work with ICE on crackdowns on suspected unauthorized migrants. In December 2006, during an ICE raid at a meat packing plant in Hyrum, 156 undocumented individuals, mostly Hispanic women and parents, were taken, separating families and leaving behind children. The Diocese of Salt Lake City reached out to those affected, who were mostly parishioners of St. Thomas Aquinas in Logan, and the parish community came together to help.
- During the listening sessions in the parishes and mission, the undocumented were not afraid to talk about their legal status and difficulties. This openness shows their trust that the Catholic Church is a safe environment where they can express themselves without fear

of arrest or harassment. Among the difficulties expressed were lack of work due to the economic recession; inability to work because of no legal documents; labor and wage exploitation and few protections; inability to pursue college education because of undocumented status; fear of immigration crackdown; lack of access to legal immigration information/services; discrimination in the workplace; family separation; and proselytization.

- Migrants working in meat processing plants often suffer carpal tunnel syndrome due to repetitive motion, and many lose their jobs as a result.
- On a more positive note, some migrants use community services, such as attending an ESL course, and, as a result, some are hired by local businesses such as supermarkets.
- The workers expressed desire for
 - More bilingual priests
 - Formation of parish/mission pastoral leaders on social justice and immigration issues
 - Access to information and legal services, especially on labor and immigration issues

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Diocese of Salt Lake City should encourage rural parishes and missions to form a socio-pastoral group as a parish resource on information/referrals about immigration or social justice issues.
- Tap the potential of parish youth and young adults who are Internet savvy to raise awareness and get them involved in the Justice for Immigrants Campaign. The Diocesan Offices of Hispanic Ministry and Youth and Young Adult Ministry and other offices can give orientation to youth about this campaign.
- The diocese can further promote and encourage networking opportunities and information sharing on immigration and social justice issues among local pastoral leaders through the use of social media as a way to bridge the vast geographical distances between parishes and missions.



September 9-11, 2010: Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas

The team visited churches with outreaches to migrant farmworkers and rural immigrants and their families; Hispanic Community Services, Inc.; and three chicken farms in Waldron, where the team had conversations with chicken farm growers, a Laotian and two Vietnamese. They also dialogued with pastors, migrant ministry pastoral leaders, parishioners/migrant farmworkers, and community organizers. Masses were also celebrated with the workers and their families.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Arkansas has an estimated population of 2.8 million. Its people are predominantly Protestant. The single largest denomination is Southern Baptist Convention at 39 percent. Roman Catholics make up about 6 percent of the population.
- Arkansas is an important producer and exporter of agricultural products, with exports estimated at \$3.2 billion in 2008. In the United States, Arkansas is first in rice production,

second in poultry and egg production, and third in aquaculture and turkeys. Soybeans and cotton are other top crops.

- Several global companies are headquartered in the northwest corner of Arkansas, including Wal-Mart and Tyson Foods.
- The migration influx experienced in many areas of Arkansas is a result of migrants searching for work and retired people from other states lured by a lower cost of living and tax breaks for retirees. Migrant farmworkers are employed not only in agriculture but also in meat processing plants, fish farming, and other “near green” agriculture. Arkansas is among the top ten states with the highest number of migrant farmworkers.
- The Diocese of Little Rock covers the state of Arkansas, encompassing seventy-five counties (52,068 square miles). There are 122,842 registered Catholics; however, this number does not include the undocumented who come mainly from Mexico and Central and South America. Refugees

from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Cuba as well as Eastern Europe have been resettled through the Catholic Charities of Arkansas, and recent refugees are coming from Iraq, Iran, and Burma.

- Bishop Anthony Taylor speaks Spanish fluently and is committed to pastoral care of migrants and farmworkers, who are spread out in the heavily wooded, mountainous state, in many small, rural towns. In 2008, he released a pastoral letter on the human rights of immigrants, *I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me*. The letter, which was sent to all parishes in the diocese, challenges Catholics to open their hearts and minds to Christ’s teachings and learn the plight of immigrants.
- The Hispanic Community Services in Jonesboro serves as a model center, serving vulnerable communities including undocumented migrant farmworkers. The center provides educational, legal, social, health, and translation/interpretation services, and referrals to appropriate entities

for need-specific services. The center provides an identification card that the undocumented can use. The photo ID, which has the basic information of the bearer, is recognized by local government offices, such as the police, as well as local businesses, like banks, for transaction purposes.

- With the economic downturn, most migrant workers find it harder to find jobs in the United States.
- A complaint of some migrant farmworker parents is that, in order for their child to attend a CCD class in a new parish as the family moves to another agricultural area for seasonal work, they are asked for a letter of

recommendation from the previous parish where the child attended CCD. If they cannot supply the letter, the child may not be able to attend CCD in the new parish.

- Undocumented youth who want to go to the university cannot do so.
- Undocumented couples who want to get married are refused by local government unless they provide a Social Security number.
- Lack of legal status, i.e., inability to obtain Social Security numbers or driver’s licenses, adds to the challenges faced by migrants. Because of fear of arrest and deportation, migrant farmworkers are not willing to report to

proper authorities unjust labor practices or an employer’s violation of wage, labor, health, or safety laws.

- Local parishes extend spiritual care and direct outreach to migrant farmworkers within their parish and mission churches, including lay formation; spiritual fellowship; and referrals to medical, legal, and social services.
- Most poultry growers obtain contracts with poultry processors such as Tyson’s, which provide chicks, feed, and management.



October 3-7, 2011: Diocese of Pueblo, Colorado

The itinerary included meeting with local advocates and Colorado sheepherders; visits to farming communities; visits to six shepherd camps and the home of a rancher; attending a deanery meeting to raise awareness and educate pastoral leaders about the plight of sheepherders; and a visit to a Migrant Services center in Palisade.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- Colorado has an estimated population of five million. Its agricultural production is dominated (75 percent) by livestock and livestock products and is driven by the cattle industry. Other livestock production includes sheep, lambs, hogs, and eggs. Important field crops are wheat, corn, and hay. Beans, grain, sorghum, potatoes, and sugar beets are also produced.
- The sheep industry is a \$100 million business in Colorado. Colorado is one of the top sheep-producing states in the nation.

- Thousands of Basques were recruited from Spain due to severe labor shortages during World War II, and they came to Colorado under contract with the Western Range Association between the 1940s and 1970 to do sheepherding as a permanent employment.
- Today, Colorado's migrant sheepherders most frequently come from Peru, Chile, and Mexico and rarely speak English. Ranchers legally employ them as part of the temporary labor program called H-2A program. The H-2A program allows U.S. employers to bring in foreign workers if there are insufficient U.S. workers. These workers are bound to these employers who petition them.
- Herders, however, are not treated like most of the farmworkers in the H-2A program. "The U.S. Department of Labor has issued regulations and special procedures that provide specific guidelines to ranchers bringing herders to the United States on H-2A visas. These special procedures exempt herders from many of the standards that exist for non-herding H-2A agricultural workers"
- There are approximately 1,500 sheepherders in the United States, of which about 300 work in Colorado. A sheepherder receives \$600-700 per month for a salary.
- Sheepherders live in isolation out on the range to take care of about 1,200 sheep, cattle, and/or goats. Besides pasturing sheep and making sure that predators such as coyotes, mountain lions, or other animals do not get the sheep, a sheepherder also performs multiple tasks such as birthing animals, taming horses, repairing fences, and irrigating fields.
- Sheepherders are dependent on the employer for food, water, and contact with others. They live in a rolling camper trailer, commonly called a campito, which is often made of fabricated steel. The trailers we visited were mostly 5-by-7-foot ramshackle abodes with a bunk bed and a wood-burning or propane stove cramped into a space that held the sheepherder's personal belongings as



well as meager rations of canned food supplied by the employers. The stove is the only source of heat in winter. The employer supplies water for drinking, cooking, and washing clothes, and the water is often stored in plastic

containers outside the trailer.

- Sheepherders live a nomadic life far from civilization. They take the sheep from the lower country in the winter to the fattening grasses of the high summer pastures. Normally, it takes a

month's travel on horseback to take the sheep to winter grazing grounds and then another month back to summer pastures.

September 4-8, 2012: Diocese of Yakima, Washington

The itinerary, which covered 950 miles in Central Washington, included meetings with leaders in ministry to migrant farmworkers in the Diocese of Yakima; dialogue with priests, migrant ministry pastoral leaders, parishioners, migrant farmworkers, orchard foremen and their families, growers, and community organizers; and visits to orchards in the Yakima area and a hop processing facility in Prosser. Mass was concelebrated on several occasions.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- The Diocese of Yakima covers 18,000 square miles in central Washington and has over 275,000 Catholics, which is about 14 percent of the diocese's total population. More than 60 percent of its people are Hispanic, and most parishes offer Masses, religious instruction, faith formation, justice education, and pro-life action in both Spanish and English.
- Central Washington is a desert but is the most productive agricultural

land in the state because of irrigation. Yakima Valley in Central Washington lead the United States in the production of apples, hops, pears, and mint. Yakima Valley produces 70 percent of all apples and 75 percent of all hops grown in the United States. The burgeoning wine industry in Yakima Valley is due in part to the similarity of soil conditions in the Yakima Valley and France. Food processing companies like Smuckers, Del-Monte, Welch's, and Tree Top are located within the Yakima Valley.

- Catholic Charities Housing Services offers an excellent affordable-housing program in its seven-county jurisdiction. Notable is the farmworker and workforce housing. The twelve housing sites in rural communities are composed of seasonal units and permanent housing, supporting Central Washington areas' agricultural communities. On-site classes are offered for computer education, English, gang prevention training, health care and pesticide information, immigration law and worker rights,

financial literacy, and first-time home-buyer education. Resident meetings are held at each site to encourage a stable family- and community-based living environment.

- Heritage University in Toppenish has two special programs that assist students with migrant or seasonal farmworker backgrounds: the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) and the Heritage University HEP Alliance Program. The CAMP Program is designed to help students begin their college careers, and participants receive a variety of services, including financial aid in the form of a scholarship, tutoring, and many other resources.
- Farmworkers benefit from organizing labor, better wages, and better living and working conditions compared to that of other states. Farmworker organizing in Washington, specifically in the Yakima Valley, dates back to the early 1900s.
- The Yakima Valley Farmworkers Clinic, which originated in 1978, provides comprehensive medical, dental,

and social services for farmworkers, the underserved, and others. Medical coverage for migrant farmworkers injured in the workplace is required by state law.

- Seven diocesan seminarians experienced agricultural work during the summer as paid laborers in the fields as part of a learning program to better prepare them to serve as priests.
- Additional information was provided during the listening sessions and dialogue:
 - Farmworkers are employed not only in the fields but also in cold storage facilities, food processing plants, packing plants, and sheds.
 - Many immigrants are staying. They are skilled workers and have steady work, and there are those (Chicanos) who, over a period of time, have owned lands and become growers.

- In the last four years, there has been an increased demand for single-family home ownership. This seems to suggest that more migrant families are staying in one place.
- In Quincy City, technology companies Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Intuit have built large data centers. Quincy is considered an excellent place for data centers because of the inexpensive, reliable hydropower from the nearby Columbia River.
- A lot of students are utilizing the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program.
- An increase is seen in the number of *notarios*, immigration assistants who charge for help on immigration issues and other legal matters.

- Often, these *notarios* take advantage of migrants.
- Immigrants from diverse cultures bring with them their faith. Popular religiosity for Hispanics includes customs such as quinceañeras and devotions, which offer moments for catechesis. In general, it was the impression of the USCCB visitors that popular religiosity is appreciated in the Yakima diocese and is used also as a springboard for deeper evangelization and catechesis. At the same time, it was clear from a couple of instances that this focus and sensitivity has to be continually emphasized, especially with clergy, seminarians, and pastoral agents who are new to the area.

October 21-25, 2013: Diocese of Birmingham, Alabama

The itinerary, which covered 780 miles, included visits and dialogue with farmworkers—many of whom are Guatemalan Mayan—their families, clergy, lay ministers, and others who work with and on behalf of migrants; Hispanic Catholic Social Services in Homewood; the East Coast Migrant Head Start Project in Steele; Masses were celebrated with the workers.

PROFILE AND OBSERVATIONS

- The Diocese of Birmingham was established in 1969 and includes 39 counties over 28,091 square miles in the northern part of Alabama.
- Livestock products generate about 82 percent of Alabama’s annual agricultural production. The other 18 percent comes from crops. The top five agricultural products are broilers (young chickens), cattle and calves, chicken eggs, greenhouse and nursery products, and cotton. Alabama is considered twelfth in the nation in

tomato production.

- Tomato pickers in Steele are said to be better paid than those in Florida, according to a local source. After harvest season, which runs until late November, most migrate to Florida for work and come back in May to plant.
- Good work has been done to reach out to immigrants and migrants through the different diocesan ministries and services as well as through local parishes and other Catholic entities. Partnership with local communities, collaboration and networking with NGOs and Christian groups, health care providers, and government entities provide further opportunities for services to the underserved, such as migrant farmworkers.
- Hispanic Catholic Social Services, also known as “La Casita,” a department of the diocese, is a community resource that offers a variety of services, including language assistance; social services and case management; counseling and sacramental information; immigration assistance; and education classes.
- Alabama HB 56, an anti-illegal immigration bill signed into law in June 2011 and regarded as the nation’s strictest anti-illegal immigration law, created chilling fear among the Latino communities and adversely impacted industries dependent on migrant labor, such as agricultural farms and meat processing plants. Public schools were also impacted because of a significant drop in attendance of Hispanic children.
- In October 2013, civil rights groups and church coalitions reached a settlement with the State of Alabama that blocked key parts of HB 56 Alabama’s controversial immigration law.
- Additional information provided during the listening sessions and dialogue:
 - As a result of HB 56, the majority of the undocumented migrated to other states or hunkered down, staying at home without work. A good number also joined grassroots immigrant

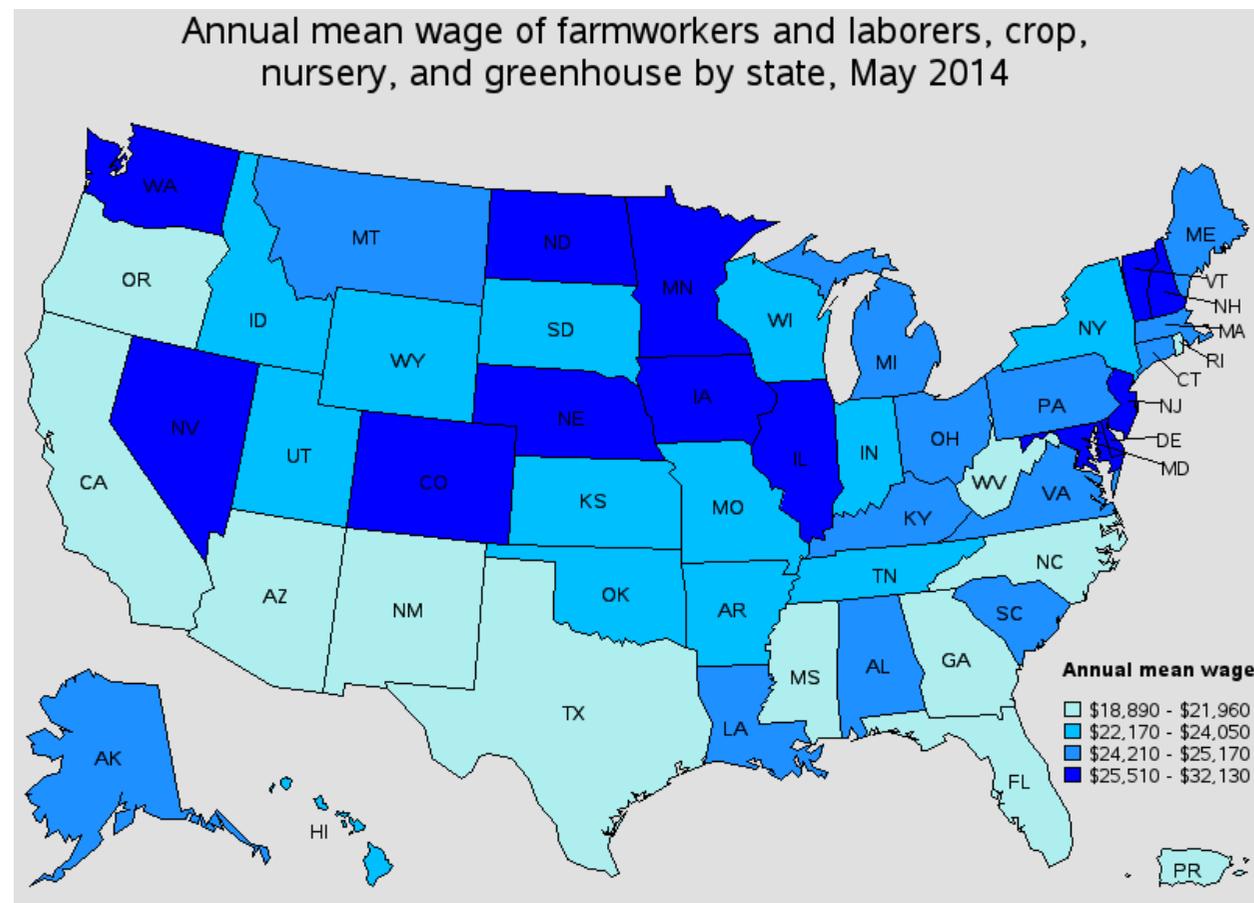
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Seminarians could be encouraged to have mission experience in Hispanic Catholic Social Services, not only to learn Spanish but also to be immersed in Latino culture and to get exposure to the services that the center offers.
- Parish outreach coordinators, pastoral leaders, and Catholic groups could further tap into local community organizations to enhance services to at-risk immigrant and migrant farmworker communities.
- There is a need for more bilingual clergy. Also, a growing number of Guatemalan Mayans could benefit greatly if a Mayan-speaking priest can visit and celebrate Mass with them occasionally.
- Pastoral ministers could use pastoral courses on migrant ministry offered by the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network.

rights groups to advocate for the repeal of HB 56 and push for comprehensive immigration reform.

- A strong tornado in Tuscaloosa two years ago compounded the problems already experienced by many communities.
- For the Guatemalan Mayans, there is a sense that they are even more marginalized and discriminated against. Language barrier is one factor. Although a number of them learn Spanish in Guatemala, many have to learn the Spanish language in the United State to be able to engage with Hispanics in addition to learning English. There is also a perception among them that Hispanics, especially Mexicans, are given preference for government services such as obtaining car stickers.
- Witnessing to and living the faith is important for these immigrant/migrant communities.
- Women farmworkers are more vulnerable to exploitation and sexual abuse and harassment.
- The presence and ministries of Latina women religious, such as the Guadalupana Sisters, contribute much to the diocese’s mission to evangelize and provide pastoral outreach to immigrant/migrant communities, especially those in remote areas.
- Parish clergy in agricultural areas celebrate bilingual Mass, provide the sacraments, and extend spiritual care.

Annual Mean Wage of Agricultural Workers, All Other, by State, May 2013



From <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes452092.htm>



Conclusion: From the Current Assistant Director of Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

The United States Catholic Church has a long

history of providing pastoral care for migrants, thereby manifesting the universality of the Catholic Church in its richness in positive ways. Many arch/dioceses make significant efforts to care for migrants. One of the many ways the Church shows her care is through pastoral visits to various migrant camps and ministries. Thank you to all who assisted in bringing this publication together, and especially Bishop John Manz, Sr. Myrna Tordillo, MSCS, and Joyce Duriga.

Indeed, “Ten Years of Pastoral Visits to Migrant Workers” manifests the long history of the Church’s pastoral care and concern about the dignity of work and the rights of workers, and in particular of the migrant farmworkers, who are among the most vulnerable and exploited of our nation. During the visits, Bishop Manz was able to listen to the stories of the migrant farmworkers and learn about their challenges, their working conditions, and their

contributions toward economic growth of the United States.

The migrant farmworkers are confronted with a lot of challenges, and they include

- Occupational hazards (agriculture is among the most dangerous occupations in United States)
- Harassment by immigration enforcement officers through worksite raids
- Low wages, long hours of work, and few labor protections
- Need for easy access to immigration information, advocacy, legal and labor rights representation
- Lack of sanitary facilities, (water and bathrooms), unsanitary working living conditions (many are exposed to pesticides)
- Need for more bilingual priests, not only to celebrate Mass but also for other sacraments, e.g., confessions, as well as bilingual counselors; need for leadership formation for parish pastoral leaders
- Need to educate farmworkers/migrants

about their human and legal rights (many migrants are detained and put in detention centers because they lack basic knowledge of laws)

These pastoral visits provide important information and offer recommendations on ways to promote outreach to migrant farmworkers as well as to promote awareness of the reality of the farmworkers among the leaders of the Church. The pastoral visits help bring the presence of the Church to the often isolated migrant people; and to establish communication links among those working to meet the pastoral and temporal needs of migrant workers.

Furthermore, the visits provided a better way for the bishops to understand the needs of the migrant workers and to evaluate how the church can contribute to and impact the lives of migrant workers. The visits brought a blessing not only to the migrant farmworkers but to the entire Church. Through the visits, church communities, migrant outreach volunteers, migrant farmworker agencies, and agricultural workers gathered in prayer and discussed ways

to collaborate and advocate for the pastoral and social needs of the farmworkers.

Pope Francis, in his Message for the 2015 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, made an urgent call: “The mission of the Church, herself a pilgrim in the world and the Mother of all, is thus to love Jesus Christ, to adore and love him, particularly in the poorest and most abandoned; among these are certainly migrants and refugees, who are trying to escape difficult living conditions and dangers of every kind” (September 3, 2014).

The Church sees it as not only a religious but also a moral obligation to provide assistance for those in need, the poor, and the marginalized, and to find meaningful ways to care for them. The Church is committed to welcoming everyone as Christ himself. Indeed, the love of Christ toward the migrants and the refugees necessitated the pastoral visits to the migrant farmworkers in order to discern appropriate pastoral and social services. The importance of the episcopal liaison visits cannot be overemphasized. The visitations demonstrate the bishops’ awareness of the needs of migrant workers and their concern toward addressing them. I believe that the awareness created through the pastoral visits will inform people’s perspective about the migrant workers and increase a sense of urgency for immigration

reform, especially during this fiftieth anniversary of the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act.

Today, one continues to wonder what more the Church can do in addition to current policy of advocacy efforts, immigration reform, education initiatives on the Church’s teaching, public statements on immigration issues, and the Justice for Immigrants Campaign. It is important to note that enacting the Immigration and Nationality Act brought about changes in U.S. demographics that led to an increase in immigration. This demographic change creates a beautiful, multicultural society in the United States that can be celebrated with honor, pride, and great satisfaction, not only for new immigrants but for all the members of the local church.

The United States is blessed with the presence of many people of various cultural backgrounds and languages. Many parishes have committed themselves to welcoming these immigrants by engaging in special evangelization efforts for immigrants, catechizing, and celebrating liturgies in their native languages. Meanwhile, others organize different intercultural activities. According to the U.S. bishops’, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us*, “The Church of the twenty-first century will be, as it has always

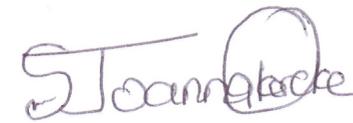
been, a Church of many cultures, languages, and traditions, yet simultaneously one, as God is one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” (USCCB, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, USCCB: 2000). We must acknowledge that, despite our different cultures, genders, religions, languages, and race, human persons—men and women—are created in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26-27.)

The faith community into which the immigrants are well received and integrated is enriched with their spiritual gifts, deep cultural values, and wealth of faith traditions. “The Church must, therefore, welcome all persons regardless of race, culture, language, and nation with joy, charity, and hope” (USCCB, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* [USCCB: 2003], no. 103), and, as Pope Francis urges, “without distinction or limits, in order to proclaim that ‘God is love’” (Message for the 2015 World Day Migrants and Refugees). In welcoming immigrants, the Church has always contemplated Christ, drawing inspiration from his words, “I was . . . a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). It is important to protect and honor the dignity of every human person.

Finally, conscious of the need for unity in the Catholic Church, which is visible,

alive, and active among all peoples, cultures, and languages throughout the world, I join my supplications with the prayers of Jesus “that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me” (Jn 17:21). As we relate with immigrants and strangers in our midst, let our lives be animated by Christian faith and love, reflecting the mind and heart of Jesus who, himself as a baby, was a stranger in Egypt and who said, “Whoever receives you receives me” (Mt 10:40).

Thank you and God bless you all.



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By the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

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Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

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