

Ten Years

of Pastoral Visits

Hope for Migrant Workers

“La Iglesia en salida”

2015-2025



Report of the Ten Years of Pastoral Visits, covering episcopal pastoral visits to migrant workers across the U.S. during the decade 2015-2025.

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Cover image: Workers in North Carolina in 2024. Back cover image: Attendees at Mass in El Paso, Texas in 2019.

Ten Years of Pastoral Visits

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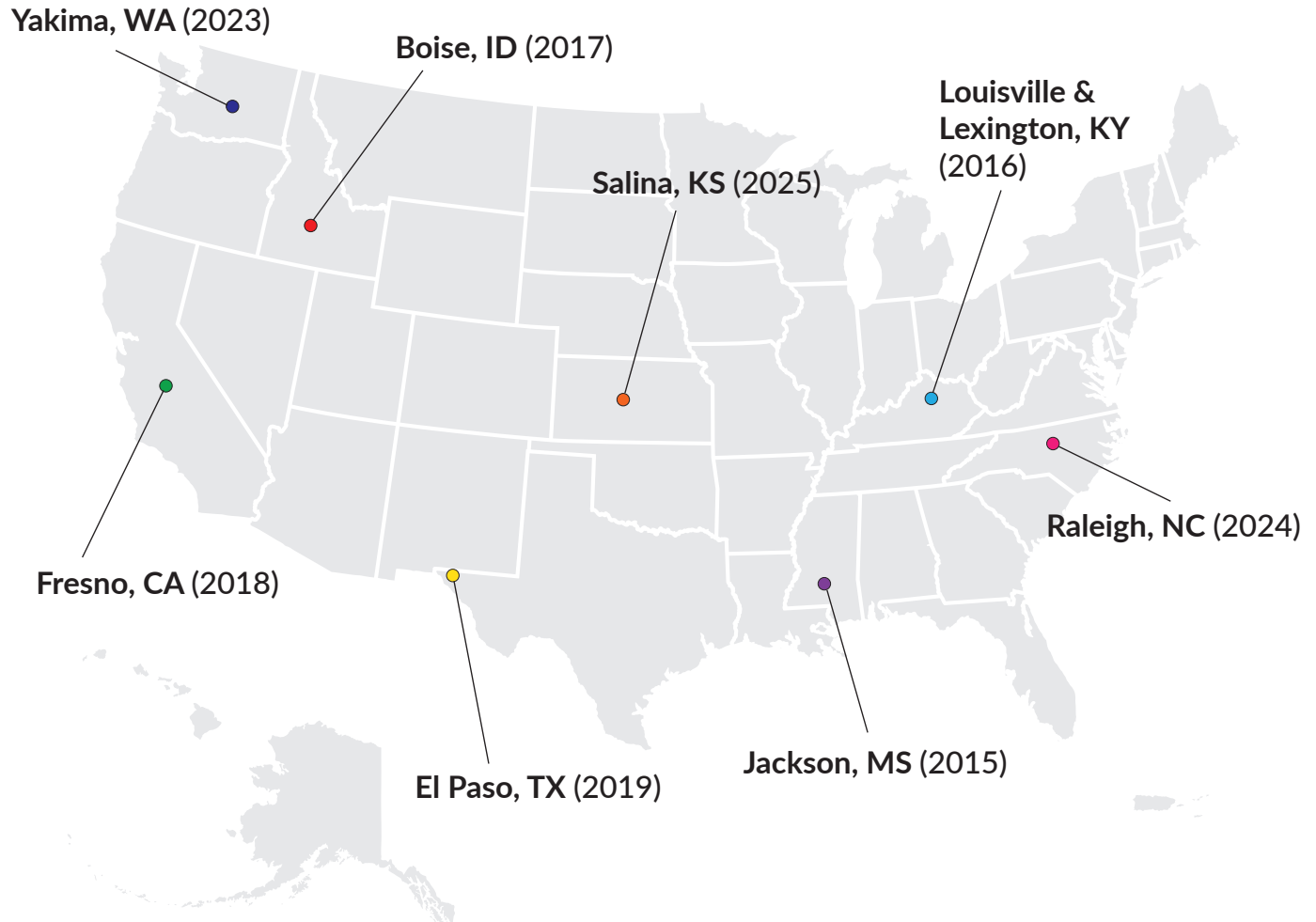
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Map of Pastoral Visits by Diocese and Date of Visit





Foreword

*Photo Credit: Office of Communications,
Diocese of Victoria*

Brothers and sisters, I write to you during a time of extreme turmoil for immigrant communities within the United States. Amidst new legislation, increased enforcement, and the suspension of the refugee resettlement program and many parole programs, the immigration landscape has changed dramatically since our last retrospective report in 2015. The change is especially felt by USCCB, which is withdrawing from the federal refugee resettlement program after nearly fifty years of participation.

Despite the many challenges they face every day, immigrants are contributing to our communities, working, attending school, and revitalizing our parishes. I am grateful to present the second edition of *Ten Years of Pastoral Visits*, covering episcopal pastoral visits to migrant workers across the U.S. during the decade 2015-2025. 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 (SCDC/PCMRT). The report highlights the many challenges faced by migrant workers, the energy and creativity they bring to discussions about solutions to those challenges, and outlines the support offered by diocesan and national staff, pastoral leaders and volunteers across the country.

As you read through this report, I hope you are moved to reflect on the roles migrant workers play in your own community and life. If you are interested in learning more, I highly recommend visiting the USCCB's Justice for Immigrants website (<https://justiceforimmigrants.org/>), which includes helpful information about the Church's stance on many migration issues; the JFI website also includes helpful advocacy tools to use with your lawmakers.

I extend heartfelt thanks to Most Reverend Joseph Tyson, Bishop of Yakima, Washington, and the episcopal liaison to migrant farmworkers, and to Sr. Joanna Okereke, Assistant Director of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, for their work coordinating and participating in the annual pastoral visits, and for their work on this report.

I am also grateful for the hard work of many Catholic organizations and

volunteers who welcome newcomers across the U.S. In this Jubilee year, may we all remember the words of Pope Francis: "Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ..." (*Pope Francis, Message for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2018*).

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Brendan J. Cahill, STD
Bishop of Victoria
Chairman, Subcommittee on Pastoral
Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers





Photo Credit: Diocese of Yakima

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as the episcopal liaison for the Migrant Farmworker Ministry since 2022. The annual pastoral visits to migrant farmworkers are a highlight of my year, because they represent what Pope Francis called “*La Iglesia en salida*” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 24) - a Church that goes out, into planting fields and orchards, meeting the people of God where they live and work.

I thank Bishop Brendan Cahill, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, and Sr. Joanna Okereke, Assistant Director of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, for their leadership on these issues. As you read through the reports of the past ten years, you will see a throughline of the Church’s care for migrants and travelers.

My own diocese in Yakima, Washington, is home to many migrant

Preface

farmworkers each year, and ministering to these workers has become a required part of our diocesan seminarians’ training. I hope that every Catholic will feel the call to go out, to accompany our brothers and sisters in the fields, in our Churches, and in our communities.

If every reader takes away one thing from this book, I hope it’s the humanity of these farmworkers. As you’ll see in these reports, the workers withstand grueling and dangerous work conditions, extremely low and unstable wages, and broken promises from employers and governments – all for the hope of a better future for their families. They share the dreams of all other parents: a safe home, education for their children, dignified work that pays the bills. These farmworkers’ sacrifices also enable our high standard of living in the United States, with affordable and plentiful food year-round.

I am grateful for the efforts of those who minister to migrant workers, and above all, I am grateful for the workers themselves, who are a gift to our country and to our Church.

Most Reverend Joseph J. Tyson, D.D.
Bishop of Yakima
PCMRT Episcopal Liaison, Migrant
Farmworker Ministry



Introduction



Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren, USCCB

Every year, the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers (PCMRT) organizes a pastoral visit with migrant farmworkers in different dioceses. The goal of the visits is to learn about the needs and realities of the local community and their ministry with migrant farmworkers. The visits allow for discussions of best practices and encourage dioceses to grow and strengthen ministry efforts, to bring encouragement and hope to all those involved in migrant farmworkers ministry, and to pray together as the Body of Christ.

Ten Years of Pastoral Visits captures the realities faced by farmworkers across the nation. It describes PCMRT's efforts to empower and strengthen dioceses with migrant farmworker ministries by providing ministry resources and encouraging collaborations among migrant ministry leaders. PCMRT

collaborates with the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN) to strengthen the ministry by raising awareness, disseminating pastoral resources, identifying new opportunities for growth, and connecting leaders to promote and facilitate the migrant farmworkers pastoral visits.

The plight of farmworkers is one of great concern to the Catholic Church. These men and women labor tirelessly in U.S. fields, orchards, and other settings, helping to ensure we have food on our tables, while often enduring harsh conditions, isolation, and exploitation. Justice demands that their contributions be recognized, and that they be treated fairly and in accordance with their God-given dignity. As Pope Leo XIV rightly said, they are “messengers” and “privileged witnesses of hope” who “... demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God, as they face adversity while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible” (*Pope Leo XIV, Message for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 2025*). Indeed, the Church remains committed to walking with them and calling for reforms to our immigration system that provide a pathway to legal status.

We hope this report inspires leaders to share their experiences and encourage the Church to better support

migrant workers by connecting them with Catholic parishes to offer them pastoral care, community, and spiritual nourishment, as well as practical help. This work will undoubtedly help to increase awareness of the presence and contributions of migrant workers among us. May it encourage us all to consider ways of being, in the words of the late Pope Francis, *La Iglesia en salida*, (*Evangelii Gaudium* 24)— “a church [that] goes forth” — to bring the Gospel and accompany the people where they are.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sr. Joanna Okereke".

Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ
Assistant Director, Pastoral Care of
Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers
Secretariat of Cultural Diversity
in the Church
United States Conference of Catholic
Bishops





Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren, USCCB

Thank you for your interest in *Ten Years of Pastoral Visits: Hope for Migrant Farmworkers*. The USCCB Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church/ Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers (SCDC/PCMRT) is proud to publish our second report on ten years of annual visits to migrant farmworkers across the United States. Much has changed since our last *Ten-Year Report* was published in 2015. However, many things have remained the same: the cruel and often dangerous working conditions for migrant workers, the necessity of their labor to the U.S. agricultural system, the workers' faith, hope and optimism, and the Church's commitment to tending to farmworkers' pastoral needs.

Our faith calls us to welcome migrants as brothers and sisters in Christ, and this message is more important now than ever. Migrant workers perform

Invitation

dangerous yet necessary work; working long hours in brutal weather, earning very little money, and often without a safety net if they are injured. Their hard work kept the United States' farms, orchards, dairy, and meat industries going during the COVID-19 pandemic, during catastrophic weather events, and even now, with the increased fear of deportations and family separation. As Catholic social teaching reminds us, every worker deserves a just wage, respect for their human dignity, and the chance to improve their family's lives.

I am grateful for the national and diocesan staff who have accompanied workers during these pastoral visits, and for the volunteers and organizations who advocate on behalf of migrant workers. I invite you to read through these pages and pray that these workers' stories will open eyes, hearts and minds to the realities of migrant labor in the United States, the value of that labor to our economy, and the need for solidarity with our brothers and sisters.

Respectfully,

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



October 11-16, 2015: Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi



*Photo Credit: Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ
USCCB*

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

The history of the Diocese of Jackson began in 1837, with the founding of the Diocese of Natchez. In the current era, the diocese covers most of the state (sixty-five of eighty-two counties) and has over 45,000 Catholics among its seventy-three parishes and sixteen missions.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team met with migrant workers in multiple communities in the Jackson metropolitan area (Canton, Greenwood, Leland, and Cleveland, MS).
- The team visited migrants farming sweet potatoes in Vardaman, Topashaw Farms Potato Shed, a sweet-potato farm owned by a

family in Bruce, the America's Catch catfish farm in Itta Bena, and a farm in Leland where cilantro and kale are grown.

- The team met with Bishop Joseph Kopacz, priests and officials from the diocese and from Catholic Charities, ministers who work directly with migrants, as well as those working in ministry with prisoners and the with Air Force.
- Mass was celebrated at Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church (Houston), America's Catch (Itta Bena), and Our Lady of Victories (Cleveland). Two potluck dinners were held with migrant workers.

*Photo Credit: Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ
USCCB*



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide transportation for farmworkers to attend Mass. It is noted that many migrants' work schedules make it difficult for them to participate in parish activities. Pastoral outreach can encourage sacramental participation, and discourage illicit behavior, such as unmarried partners living together.
- Encourage seminarians to develop their Spanish language skills.
- Encourage the building up of pastoral leadership skills among farmworkers and lay ministers. These volunteers and ministry leaders should connect with CMFN and PCMRT, who can facilitate the sharing of best practices.

- Continue outreach by parishes; create a strategy to engage more Spanish-speaking volunteers.
- Share mobile-friendly materials that workers can access by phone while working, such as ESNE Radio, a Spanish Catholic radio network.
- Facilitate and promote the attendance of workers' children at local Catholic schools.
- Provide health centers, social services, and legal support to farmworker families.
- Prioritize advocacy around safe and affordable farmworker housing.



September 19-23, 2016: Dioceses of Louisville and Lexington, KY

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

The Catholic community of Kentucky has historical roots dating back to the 1770s, with the establishment of Louisville as the diocesan seat in 1841, and its elevation to Archdiocese in 1937. The Diocese of Lexington was established more recently in 1988. The Archdiocese of Louisville counts approximately 200,000 Catholics within its boundaries, which span twenty-four counties over 8,124 square miles. The Diocese of Lexington encompasses fifty counties, spanning over 16,000+ square miles of the eastern and central parts of the state; estimates indicate that less than 5 percent of individuals living within the diocesan boundaries self-identify as Catholic.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

Archdiocese of Louisville

- In the Archdiocese of Louisville, the team visited with Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, leaders of the diocesan migrant ministry, and staff from Catholic Charities. The visit included an overview of Common Table, a culinary training program offered by

Catholic Charities. A coalition of local parishes (Common Earth Partners) that financially supported community gardening efforts was also discussed.

- The team also met with the pastor, lay assistant director, and two women religious working with Centro Latino in Shelbyville.
- The team visited with staff at Churchill Downs (which employs about 1,000 migrant workers), migrant workers at Bluegrass Nursery (H-2A visa recipients) in Shelbyville, and workers at a LaGrange horse farm.
- Mass was celebrated at a parish, where dinner was also shared with community members.

Diocese of Lexington

- In the Diocese of Lexington, the team met with Bishop John Stowe, O.F.M., Conv. and diocesan leaders in Hispanic ministry.
- The team visited workers at Ashford Stud horse farm, Lane's End horse farm, Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital, and the Barton farm, where tobacco and corn are grown.
- Mass was celebrated and confessions heard on a horse farm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Supplement existing material support to migrant workers with partnerships emphasizing pastoral care; Common Earth Partners could be instrumental here.
- A council for Hispanic and Latino youth could energize Louisville youth who have been hesitant to participate in the existing youth council.
- The number of workers at Churchill Downs makes it an excellent location for training lay volunteers and seminarians in pastoral ministry.
- Cultural programming could also be provided by Centro Latino. Workers in Shelbyville were noted as reporting a need for more outreach.

“Our common dignity as human beings calls us to respect the alien among us, regardless of their status or social position. A preferential love for the poor and disenfranchised is a sure sign of one’s Christian identity.”

- Most Rev. Robert N. Lynch,
Former Bishop of St. Petersburg, FL.



Photo Credit: David Corrales, USCCB

Photo Credit: Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, USCCB



October 22–26, 2017: Diocese of Boise, Idaho

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

The history of the Catholic Church in Idaho is a story of migration, shaped by a growing and changing economy and waves of immigrants with historical connections to the Church. Data cited from the 2000 census indicated that approximately 10 percent of the state's ~1.3 million residents were Catholic. All Catholics in the state of Idaho are served by the thirty-two chapels, twenty-four stations, and fifty-five parishes of the Diocese of Boise.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team visited several churches in the diocese, including St. Mary's, St. Paul's, and St. Jerome's. Mass was celebrated at St. Jerome's.
- Several offices in the diocese agreed to collaboratively support a leadership program for migrants, with input from Fr. Tom Florek, S.J., then at the University of Detroit Mercy. A "train the trainers" model will be used, with the goal of empowering migrant leaders to address local needs. The Office of Hispanic Ministry also agreed

to work on a pastoral plan for ministry to migrants.

- The team visited migrant workers at multiple employment locations, which reflected the spectrum of labor needs. Partner's Produce is a plant processing produce; Statesny's Farm hires workers seasonally, while the local dairy farms require labor year-round.
- The team also visited the Caldwell Labor Camp in Canyon County. This historical site, built by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in 1939, has a long history of housing migrant workers, with a current population of roughly 1,500 people. Rent subsidies help keep housing affordable; community amenities include a school, a drugstore, and a church. While H-2A workers may only stay in the camp for a few months, some families have spent generations living in the labor camp.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Concretize outreach, e.g., having dedicated staff for migrant outreach, yearly pastoral visits chaired by the Hispanic Ministry staff of the diocese, National Migration Week resources for pastors, and an annual gathering of migrant ministry leaders. Dioceses with established migrant ministries, such as Yakima or Spokane, could be valuable partners.
- Work to ensure that migrants can participate fully in the Sacraments, including matrimony and receiving the Eucharist; the latter could be facilitated by ministers going out to farms.
- Develop diocesan retreats that serve migrant youth, young adults, and/or families



September 16–19, 2018: Diocese of Fresno, California

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

Spiritual and physical proximity to Mexico has been a mainstay of Catholic life in Fresno, California; in the 1700s, the city was part of the Diocese of Guadalajara, Mexico. The changing geographic borders and name of the diocese over the centuries reflect the dynamic history of the region; the modern borders of the Diocese of Fresno were not finalized until the late 1960s. Currently, more than 1 million Catholics live in the diocese, which is served by eighty-seven parishes and covers 35,000+ square miles.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team visited with workers harvesting dried grapes (raisins).
- The team met with migrant ministry staff from the diocese and also held a meeting at St. Joseph Church in Selma, CA, with members of the faith group *Faith in the Valley*.
- Directors from diocesan offices, and pastoral staff from local parishes, attended training on leadership formation presented by Fr. Tom Florek, S.J.
- Mass and a reception were celebrated at St. Anthony Marie Claret parish.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Encouraging the provision of health education for migrant workers, as well as “know your rights” training.
- Workers expressed fear for their safety; threats included the ever-present specter of ICE raids and deportations, and the risks to physical safety posed by their work. Any work time lost to illness or injury, and the subsequent loss of income, caused a great deal of stress for workers and their families
- Strengthening the links between local parishes and farmworkers. This could align with the recommended development of a pastoral plan. The religious formation of youth should be a priority.
- Creating well-formed and well-trained ministry and community leaders.

September 23–27, 2019: Dioceses of Las Cruces, El Paso, and Ciudad Juárez

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW



Photo Credit: Yolanda Taylor-Burwell, USCCB

- The **Diocese of Las Cruces** was established in 1982. It encompasses territories in southern New Mexico previously served by the dioceses of Santa Fe (New Mexico), El Paso (Texas) and Tucson (Arizona). The diocese, which has more than 230,000 Catholics, spans ten counties, and operates five schools, forty missions, and forty-six parishes. A mission established in modern Juarez was the hub of many religious activities in the area between the late 1500s and early 1600s; this gives the diocese a unique identity and underlines the physical and cultural proximity between Las Cruces and Mexico.

- The **Diocese of El Paso** was established in 1914 and holds a unique place in Catholic migration history; the first Hispanic bishop in the United States was appointed in El Paso, and a migrant to the diocese, Fr. Pedro

de Jesús Maldonado, was later canonized. The diocese spans 26,000+ square miles and ten counties; the diocese estimates that more than 80 percent of the population of El Paso is Catholic.

- The **Diocese of Ciudad Juárez**, with its titular city right on the border with the United States on the Mexico side, plays an important role in the care of migrants. As a border diocese, it serves a community that is influenced by both Mexican and American cultures and languages. The diocese covers 29,639 square kilometers (over 11,000 square miles) and includes twenty-one parishes.

BACKGROUND OF THE PASTORAL ENCOUNTER WITH MIGRANTS AT THE BORDER

PCMRT's pastoral encounter with the migrants was organized in anticipation of the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees. It was an opportunity for the Church to raise their prophetic voice, to be with the migrants, and to witness the migrants' reality at the border as well as to help migrants grow in their faith. As the universal Church celebrated the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, it was able to not only highlight the problems along the border but also offer an opportunity to walk with migrants and reflect on how to welcome, love and treat them as brothers and sisters.

- For the first time in this annual initiative, PCMRT engaged in the collaboration of more than five different USCCB offices. This collaboration had the benefit of increasing awareness of the pastoral needs of migrant farmworkers and their families at the border, as well as empowering the Church to offer more integral care to these populations across the United States.

- The visit shed light on migrants' work conditions, immigration laws that affect them and their families, the difficulties of their journey, their faith, their sacramental and spiritual needs, and the call for everyone in the Church to address this humanitarian crisis.
- The site visits to migrant camps, farms, and shelters brought appropriate pastoral insights into group discussions and working sessions. This integral approach empowered ministry and Church leadership to work together toward building new pathways for migrant ministry.



U.S. Bishops, and Rev. Robert Stark, S.J. who served as the Regional Coordinator of the Migrants and Refugees Section for the Vatican (far right), speak at a press conference outside Centro de los Trabajadores Fronterizos in El Paso, Texas. Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continuing advocacy for comprehensive immigration reform prioritizing family reunification.
- Advocating for a dignified pathway to citizenship for those without legal status, including parents whose children are U.S. citizens.
- Confronting the racism that fuels much of the anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States; such beliefs are particularly scandalous when expressed by Catholics, given their direct contradiction of the teachings of the Church.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team visited Casa Del Migrante and the parish of Corpus Christi in Ciudad Juarez, speaking with migrants and their families about their experiences. Some were in the process of being returned to their states or countries of origins. Others were seeking respite on their way to the United States. Others were waiting to receive legal counseling for their immigration or asylum appointments.
- Participants were able to witness and listen to first-hand accounts of how migrants come to the United States for the opportunities to reunite with family members, along with the promise of employment and educational opportunities.
- Many are also forced to leave their homelands by the immiserating forces of poverty and violence, particularly violence associated with the drug trade and gangs.

- This visit served as a demonstration of the Catholic bishops' solidarity with the migrants and an opportunity to learn about their lives, struggles, and faith.
- The bishops held a press conference outside of El Paso's Centro Sin Fronteras. The bishops and delegation also visited agricultural fields, where blessing of the fields, the water for the crops, and the workers' hands took place.
- Mass was celebrated at several locations including at St. Pius X parish in El Paso, at Centro Sin Fronteras, and in the fields with workers and parishioners in Hatch, New Mexico. Meals were shared with migrant workers at both locations, with the local parish in Hatch offering a harvest banquet feast for the workers, growers, ecclesiastical authorities, and visitors alike



Delegation listens at Centro Sin Fronteras in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB



Migrants in Ciudad Juárez waiting to cross into the United States, Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB

A statue in Ciudad Juárez is covered in offerings, such as rosaries or identification cards, left by migrants as they entrust their journey to the U.S. to Christ, Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB





A parish's presentation of the bounty of the land, in Hatch, New Mexico, Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB



A welcoming poster set up in a parish in Hatch, New Mexico, Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB

“Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment.”

- John Paul II, Centesimus Annus: On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, no. 58

The Period of the Coronavirus Pandemic - (2020, 2021, 2022)

OVERVIEW

When the coronavirus (COVID-19) swept the globe in the spring of 2020, much of the world shut down, with many people able to socially distance or work from home. However, as essential employees, migrant farmworkers did not have this luxury. Migrant workers bravely continued to show up to work, ensuring all had access to food and other essentials. Many migrant workers labored throughout the whole shutdown period, even though their working conditions did not allow social distancing or adequate access to personal protective equipment, and it was increasingly difficult to access healthcare in rural locations, with clinics and hospitals oversaturated or closing down.

Through the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN), the Catholic Church continued to minister to farmworker communities during the pandemic. Fr. Thomas Florek, SJ, Executive Director of CMFN and PCMRT advisor for migrant farmworkers, made sixteen pastoral visits across the country

between 2020-2022. Fr. Florek was invited to speak about his experiences ministering to migrant workers during a September 2022 conference in Rome.

USCCB honors the heroic role played by migrant farmworkers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In late April 2020, and in the face of worsening conditions, the U.S. bishops raised their voices in support of migrant farmworkers' efforts during the pandemic; the Spanish and English translations of the statement are included on the next page here.





NEWS

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Bishops Tasked with the Pastoral Care of Migrants Issue Statement in Support of Migrant Farmworkers During the Coronavirus Pandemic

April 28, 2020

WASHINGTON—“We urge our political leaders and policymakers to consider the realities and emerging, pressing needs of the farmworker communities across the country during this time of the coronavirus outbreak. To defeat the virus, no one must be left out,” said a group of four U.S. bishops tasked with the pastoral care of migrant populations.

The bishops put forth a statement in support of migrant farmworkers during the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez of Philadelphia and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of Yakima, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers (PCMRT), Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose and PCMRT’s episcopal liaison for migrant farmworker ministry, and Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington and Chairman of the Committee on Migration.

The statement of the four bishops follows:

“The coronavirus has changed life for most of the planet, as billions of people experience social isolation and quarantine. Here in the United States, it is estimated that close to 95% of Americans have been impacted by some form of stay-at-home order. For those who are under such stay-at-home mandates, we thank you for doing your part in following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and social distancing recommendations of your dioceses, state, and local governments to curb the spread of this pandemic.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude and prayers for the many essential workers throughout the country, helping us receive our medicines, groceries, and other fundamental needs during this difficult time. We would like to highlight the reality of migrant farmworker communities and honor their heroic role amidst the many challenges they face during this crisis.

More than a million farmworkers across the United States are regarded as essential workers, critical to keeping the nation fed during this pandemic. The U.S. Department of Labor estimates that roughly half of these farmworkers are undocumented, while other observers suggest figures to be much higher. Like so many mobile and itinerant populations, undocumented migrant farmworkers are particularly vulnerable to the impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Many migrant farmworkers lack access to health insurance, medical treatment, and sick or paid leave options; farmworker housing conditions are often overcrowded with little opportunity for social distancing, including transportation to and from work, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is not always available. Additionally, conditions of their immigration visas can make them unwilling or unable to speak out about a need for protection due to the threat of losing their job.

Along with these challenges to healthcare access and community mitigation during the outbreak are economic consequences of the pandemic that are having devastating effects on these communities. With disruption and layoffs due to the COVID-19 virus, many farmworkers are finding themselves without income for their families for the foreseeable future, and others who would otherwise stay at home for health concerns are risking going to work during this time as essential workers. Childcare for families with school closures is another area of related concern, as families may be at a loss for affordable, viable, safe childcare options. The realities of financial instability, increased stress, and anxiety during this time may also contribute to an increase in cases of domestic violence and labor exploitation.

Add to these many challenges the fear of immigration enforcement action which may deter someone from seeking necessary medical attention or speaking up about forms of abuses at home or the workplace that occur during this time.

Because of these many, grave concerns for this community, we urge our political leaders and policymakers to consider the realities and emerging, pressing needs of the farmworker communities across the country during this time of the coronavirus outbreak. To defeat the virus, no one must be left out. The COVID-19 virus teaches us we are one human family, says the Holy Father. ‘We can only get out of this situation together, as a whole humanity.’

Despite these concerns, there are signs of hope in the agriculture industry across the nation. Many growers and farmers are doing everything possible to protect their workers and ensure awareness and social distancing guidelines and measures are communicated and implemented. We extend our sincere gratitude to these businesses and implore that this trend is executed across the country for the basic protection, safety, and wellbeing of all farmworkers and their families.

We offer the following recommendations:

- Recognize that all workers need access to free testing and care related to the COVID-19 virus
- Ensure that all housing and transportation for farmworkers complies with current CDC guidelines
- Provide information on proper health and hygiene that is easily accessible in multiple languages and infographics for illiterate workers
- Ensure access to proper hygiene and safety protections at work sites, including hand washing facilities/stations, and masks and/or other PPE
- Have an emergency health plan in place to ensure care and protocols when a worker contracts the COVID-19 virus; and
- Honor the dignity of the work of farmworkers and make sure that they are paid a livable wage as well as be eligible for other benefits to help protect their health and the health and safety of their families at this time.

We pray for all farmworkers facing difficulties and challenges related to or exacerbated by the COVID-19 virus. We pray for their protection and safety as they provide for the needs of the country; we pray for all workers currently unemployed, that the Lord will accompany them and see them through. During this challenging time, it is good to remember the words of St. John Paul II: ‘We are an Easter people, and Alleluia is our song.’ May the risen Lord send His peace and grace to be with you and your families. We turn to Our Lady of Guadalupe, asking for her intercession and maternal protection for the end to the coronavirus.”

Keywords: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, USCCB, Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church, Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, Committee on Migration, Bishop Joseph J. Tyson, Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers, Bishop Oscar Cantú, Migrant Farmworker Ministry, Coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemic.

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Obispos Encargados del Cuidado Pastoral de los Migrantes Emiten una Declaración en Apoyo de los Trabajadores Agrícolas Migrantes Durante la Pandemia de Coronavirus

28 de abril del 2020

WASHINGTON— “Instamos a nuestros líderes políticos y legisladores a considerar las realidades y las necesidades emergentes y apremiantes de las comunidades de trabajadores agrícolas en todo el país durante este tiempo del brote de coronavirus. Para vencer al virus, nadie debe quedar excluido”, dijeron cuatro obispos de Estados Unidos encargados del cuidado pastoral de las poblaciones migrantes.

Los obispos emitieron una declaración en apoyo de los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes durante la pandemia causada por el virus COVID-19. El Arzobispo Nelson J. Pérez de Filadelfia y presidente del Comité de Diversidad Cultural en la Iglesia de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB), el Obispo Joseph J. Tyson de Yakima, presidente del Subcomité de Cuidado Pastoral de Migrantes, Refugiados y Viajeros (PCMRT), el obispo Oscar Cantú de San José y enlace episcopal de PCMRT para el ministerio de trabajadores agrícolas migrantes, y el obispo Mario E. Dorsonville, obispo auxiliar de Washington y presidente del Comité de Migración.

El comunicado de los cuatro obispos es el siguiente:

“El coronavirus ha cambiado la vida de la mayor parte de las personas del planeta, ya que miles de millones experimentan aislamiento social y cuarentena. Aquí en Estados Unidos, se estima que cerca del 95% de los estadounidenses se han visto afectados por las regulaciones de permanecer en casa. Para aquellos que se encuentran bajo tales mandatos de quedarse en casa, les agradecemos por cumplir con las directrices de los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC, por sus siglas en inglés) y las recomendaciones de distanciamiento social de sus diócesis, gobiernos estatales y locales para frenar la propagación de esta pandemia

Queremos expresar nuestra sincera gratitud y oraciones por los muchos trabajadores esenciales en todo el país, ayudándonos a recibir nuestros medicamentos, alimentos y a satisfacer otras necesidades fundamentales durante este momento difícil. Nos gustaría resaltar la realidad de las comunidades de trabajadores agrícolas migrantes y honrar su papel heroico en medio de los muchos desafíos que enfrentan durante esta crisis.

Más de un millón de trabajadores agrícolas en los Estados Unidos son considerados trabajadores esenciales, críticos para mantener a la nación alimentada durante esta pandemia. El Departamento de Trabajo de los Estados Unidos estima que aproximadamente la mitad de estos trabajadores agrícolas son indocumentados, mientras que otros observadores sugieren que las cifras son mucho más altas. Al igual que muchas poblaciones móviles e itinerantes, los trabajadores agrícolas migrantes indocumentados son particularmente vulnerables al impacto del brote de coronavirus. Muchos trabajadores agrícolas migrantes carecen de acceso a seguro de salud, tratamiento médico y opciones de permisos por enfermedad o remunerados; las modalidades de vivienda de los trabajadores agrícolas a menudo están superpobladas con pocas oportunidades de distanciamiento social, incluido el transporte hacia y desde el trabajo, y el Equipo de Protección Personal (PPE, por sus siglas en inglés) no siempre está disponible. Además, las condiciones de sus visas de inmigración pueden hacer que no quieran o no puedan hablar sobre la necesidad de protección debido a la amenaza de perder su trabajo.

Junto con estos desafíos para el acceso a la atención médica y efectos sobre la comunidad durante esta crisis de salud, hay consecuencias económicas de la pandemia que están teniendo efectos devastadores en estas comunidades. Con la interrupción y los despidos debido al virus COVID-19, muchos trabajadores agrícolas se encuentran sin ingresos para proveer a sus familias en el futuro inmediato, y otros que de lo contrario se quedarían en casa por problemas de salud se arriesgan a ir a trabajar durante este tiempo como trabajadores esenciales. El cuidado de niños para las familias debido al cierre de escuelas es otro aspecto preocupante, ya que las familias pueden haber perdido opciones asequibles, viables y seguras para el cuidado de sus niños. Las realidades de la inestabilidad financiera, el aumento del estrés y la ansiedad durante este tiempo también pueden contribuir a un aumento en los casos de violencia doméstica y explotación laboral.

A estos desafíos se suma el miedo a la aplicación de las leyes de inmigración que puede disuadir a alguien de buscar la atención médica necesaria, o hablar sobre formas de abusos en el hogar o el lugar de trabajo recurrentes durante este tiempo.

Debido a estas muchas y graves preocupaciones para esta comunidad, instamos a nuestros líderes políticos y legisladores de políticas a considerar las realidades y las necesidades emergentes y apremiantes de las comunidades de trabajadores agrícolas en todo el país durante este tiempo del brote de coronavirus. Para vencer al virus, nadie debe quedar fuera. El virus COVID-19 nos enseña que somos una sola familia humana, dice el Santo Padre. ‘Solo podemos salir de esta situación juntos, como una humanidad entera’.

A pesar de estas preocupaciones, hay signos de esperanza en la industria agrícola en todo el país. Muchos productores y agricultores están haciendo todo lo posible para proteger a sus trabajadores y garantizar que se comuniquen e implementen pautas y medidas de sensibilización y distanciamiento social. Extendemos nuestro sincero agradecimiento a estas empresas e imploramos que esta tendencia se ejecute en todo el país para la protección básica, la seguridad y el bienestar de todos los trabajadores agrícolas y sus familias.

Ofrecemos las siguientes recomendaciones:

- Reconocer que todos los trabajadores necesitan acceso a pruebas gratuitas y atención relacionada con el virus COVID-19.
- Asegurarse de que todas las viviendas y el transporte para los trabajadores agrícolas cumplan con las pautas actuales de los CDC.
- Proporcionar información sobre salud e higiene adecuadas que sea fácilmente accesible en múltiples idiomas e infografías para trabajadores analfabetos.
- Asegurar el acceso a la higiene adecuada y protecciones de seguridad en los sitios de trabajo, incluidas las áreas para el lavado de manos, máscaras y otros equipos de protección personal.
- Tener establecido un plan de salud de emergencia en el lugar para garantizar la atención y los protocolos cuando un trabajador contrae el virus COVID-19; y
- Honrar la dignidad del trabajo de los trabajadores agrícolas y asegurarse de que se les pague un salario digno, así como ser elegibles para otros beneficios para ayudar a proteger su salud y la salud y seguridad de sus familias en este momento.

Oramos por todos los trabajadores agrícolas que enfrentan dificultades y desafíos relacionados o agravados por el virus COVID-19. Oramos por su protección y seguridad, ya que ellos contribuyen con la satisfacción de las necesidades del país; oramos por todos los trabajadores actualmente desempleados, para que el Señor los acompañe y los proteja. Durante este momento desafiante, es bueno recordar las palabras de San Juan Pablo II: ‘Somos el pueblo de la Pascua, y Aleluya es nuestra canción’. Que el Señor resucitado envíe su paz y gracia para estar con ustedes y sus familias. Nos dirigimos a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, pidiéndole su intercesión y protección materna para el fin del coronavirus”.

Palabras clave: Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos, USCCB, Arzobispo Nelson J. Pérez, Comité de Diversidad Cultural en la Iglesia, Obispo Mario E. Dorsonville, Comité de Migración, Obispo Joseph J. Tyson, Subcomité de Cuidado Pastoral de Migrantes, Refugiados y Viajeros, Obispo Oscar Cantú, Ministerio de Trabajadores Agrícolas Migrantes, Coronavirus, COVID-19, pandemia

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Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN) Visits 2020-2022

Between 2020-2022, the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN) visited dioceses in the following locations:

- Birmingham, AL;
- Tucson, AZ;
- Stockton, Sacramento, Fresno, and Monterey, CA;
- Boise, ID;
- Raleigh, NC;
- Paterson, NJ;
- Rochester, NY;
- Toledo and Cleveland, OH;
- San Antonio and Brownsville, TX;
- Yakima, WA; and
- Green Bay, WI.

OBSERVATIONS

- Migrant farmwork across the United States is as diverse as the landscape it covers. Migrants toil in both summer and winter with seasonal crops; they operate huge machinery or painstakingly pick items by hand. They work outdoors in orchards or planting fields, or in structures like greenhouses, packing or processing plants, dairies, and fish hatcheries. Migrant farmworkers work with animals (chickens, pigs, horses), crops

(tobacco, cotton, and dates), and even grow Christmas trees!

- Just as there is no single type of farmwork, there is no single type of “migrant farmworker.” In the United States, migrant farmworkers are native-born U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, seasonal workers with H-2A visas, and workers who have immigrated from the Caribbean, Africa, South or Central America, or Mexico.
- There has been an observed increase in the use of H-2A workers, which can result in displacement of previous workers.
- Migrant farmworkers include adult men and women, as well as unaccompanied youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Pope Francis’ words of “welcome, protect, promote & integrate” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 129) form the basis of Church accompaniment to migrants.
- Diocesan ministry staff should convene a small group of active or retired farm

work leaders, providing information about the diocese’s ministry in the area. The local leaders should be invited to share their experiences and describe the resources and challenges of the migrant worker community.

- Ensure parishioners have access to accurate information about migration, including true Church teachings; this will help combat untrue and politicized narratives in the media. Migrant workers themselves can offer witness and voice to their own realities.
- A successful migrant ministry is built by leaders with a well-formed understanding of migration; formation must inculcate respect for the sacrifices and dignity of workers.
- It is critical to have a robust network of parishes with migrant ministry; these parishes can share best practices and offer each other moral and material support.
- The Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN) (<https://cmfwn.org/>) can support dioceses in building strong migrant ministries.

August 27–30, 2023: Diocese of Yakima, Washington



Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

From its establishment in 1951, outreach to migrant farmworkers, the vast majority of whom are Latino and Hispanic Catholics, has been a priority for the Diocese of Yakima, Washington. The state saw waves of migrants seeking work in the 1930s and 1940s, and the diocese was able to build on the state's rich history of intercultural work – work that has long recognized the value of lay ministers in ethnic communities. The Diocese of Yakima includes seven counties, seven schools, and forty-one parishes.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team visited orchards, packing plants, and worker housing.
- The trip was bookended by Masses celebrated with the workers – the visit began with the group's participation in a weekly Mass at a housing site in the city of Yakima, and ended with a Mass near housing facilities in Monitor, Washington.
- Migrants shared their experiences with the team, and the group also shared meals and fellowship together. While the majority of the men in the Yakima facility were H-2A recipients, many of the workers remaining at the camp in Yakima were old farmworker families traveling from California and other states, who have worked the fruit picking circuit for decades and generations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- St. Joseph's parish in Yakima is an example of stellar services for migrant workers.
- Any diocese wishing to build a strong migrant ministry should avail themselves of the resources and knowledge of national organizations leading on these issues, including the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network, the National Farm Worker Ministry, *Pastoral Migratoria*, and Catholic Rural Life. Various offices in dioceses should coordinate closely on migrant outreach.
 - The U.S. and Mexican Church should be in alignment with their messaging around migration, particularly for those considering migration to the United States.
 - The value the Church places on family unity should also animate our efforts to keep families in contact.
- Other dioceses may wish to replicate Yakima's requirement that seminarians minister to migrant farmworkers; this training could also be helpful for new deacons. New ministers' formation can be strengthened by learning the languages of their diocesan populations, or by engaging in training such as the USCCB's *Building Intercultural Competence for Ministers*.

- Ministers should be sensitive to messages from workers about their living and employment conditions - and be thoughtful in their response. Workers may express concern about their ability to move freely in the area and access basic supplies, or unfair working conditions and payment.
- The following question should be posed to all dioceses with migrant farmworker populations: In the spirit of “*La Iglesia en salida*” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 24), where can the local diocese adjust activities, times of ministries, etc. to better meet migrants’ needs?
- The Church continues to advocate for legislation that provides established workers with legal immigration status, authorization to work, a pathway to citizenship, and that strengthens the H-2A visa program.



The delegation meets with orchard staff in the Diocese of Yakima
Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB



Mass celebrants at St. Joseph's in Yakima, Washington
Photo Credit: Ana Contreras, Diocese of Yakima

Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle and former chair of the Subcommittee on the Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers, tours a fruit packing plant in Yakima, Washington
Photo Credit: Maria Muñoz-Visoso, USCCB





Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren, USCCB

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

The Diocese of Raleigh, established in 1924, includes 33,000+ square miles, thirteen missions, and eighty-one parishes. The 2024 pastoral visit was covered by the Catholic media outlet *Our Sunday Visitor*, and the Diocese of Raleigh also produced a video about the visit.¹

¹ Negro Chin, Maria-Pia, “North Carolina pastoral visit reveals farmworkers’ harsh experiences,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, <https://www.oursundayvisitor.com/we-are-human-beings-north-carolina-pastoral-visit-reveals-farmworkers-harsh-experiences/> (accessed August 22, 2025); Negro Chin, Maria-Pia, “Raleigh Catholics strive to accompany migrant farmworkers in oft ‘forgotten’ counties,” *Our Sunday Visitor*, <https://www.osvnews.com/raleigh-catholics-strive-to-accompany-migrant-farmworkers-in-oft-forgotten-counties/> (accessed August 22, 2025); NC Catholics, “USCCB delegation visits farm workers, diocese,” *Catholic Diocese of Raleigh*, USCCB delegation visits farm workers, diocese | Diocese of Raleigh (accessed August 22, 2025).

August 1–5, 2024: Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team visited with diocesan staff at the Catholic Center; a presentation on policy information and workers’ rights was delivered by USCCB policy advisor Celina Marquez, and a panel discussion with migrant workers was facilitated by Mike Munster and Joshua Klickman, a deacon with the Diocese of Raleigh.
- The team also met with staff and volunteers at St. Ann Church (Edenton) and participated in an *Encuentro* for migrants event at Our Lady of Guadalupe (Newton Grove).
- The team met with migrant workers at several locations, including Mattamuskeet Seafood (Swan Quarter), where crab meat is processed, and Morris Farms (Colerain), where seasonal crops including tobacco and soy are grown.
- The team heard from workers that H-2A workers faced many challenges, including exploitation from employers around both

housing and work conditions; harsh weather conditions, including heat and rain, causing stress and disruptions; illnesses, such as “tobacco sickness”; and concerns over the physical distance to the nearest Church.

- Mass and a baptism were celebrated at Mattamuskeet, while dinner and a blessing were shared at Morris Farms. The diocese’s annual farmworker Mass was celebrated by Most. Rev. Luis Zamara, Bishop of Raleigh, at Our Lady of Guadalupe, with food and fellowship shared afterwards.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on expansion of protections for migrant workers and pathways to citizenship for migrants. As noted above, exploitation by employers was reported even by recipients of H-2A visas.
- Workers in rural areas need greater assistance to access social services and healthcare, particularly with transportation.
- Smartphones can help these workers communicate with relatives, access social media or web-based faith resources, such as Spanish-language content from ESNE.
- Linguistically and culturally competent lay volunteers can be a huge benefit to the workers.



Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren, USCCB



Photo Credit: Kendall McLaren, USCCB

August 25–29, 2025: Diocese of Salina, Kansas

DIOCESAN OVERVIEW

The Diocese of Salina was established in 1887 as the Diocese of Concordia, with the current name, see, and boundaries of the diocese established in 1944. The diocese has more than 40,000 Catholics living within its nearly 27,000 square miles, which covers thirty-one counties in North Kansas.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE VISIT

- The team met and participated in morning prayer with diocesan staff at the diocesan center. Bishop Vincke and his staff provided an overview of the diocese and its population and heard from the CMFN and PCMRT teams about their intentions for the visit.
- The team celebrated Mass and shared meals with migrant workers and their families at St. John's (Herrington) and Our Lady of Perpetual Help (Goodland). Masses were celebrated in Spanish, with homilies from Bishop Joseph Tyson, who drew parallels

between the workers' journeys and themes in Scripture.

During shared meals, the team invited workers to share their names, the names of their home states/towns, and something they hoped for. Many shared their concerns and challenges they are facing in the community, such as a lack of information, resources, and their concern about deportation.

- The team received a tour of the orchard/adjoining fields and the store at Depot Market in Courtland. The team shared lunch and conversation with the owners and approximately twenty H-2A workers, as well as some workers' family members
- In Hoxie, the team toured a dairy farm and spoke with approximately thirty feedlot workers at a cattle company. Conversations and prayers were held with the migrant employees of the feedlot. The team also shared dinner with the owners of the cattle company.

VISIT TO THE DIOCESE OF DODGE CITY

- Bishop Brungardt, after learning of the PCMRT pastoral visit to the Diocese of Salina from Bishop Vincke, extended an invitation for the team to visit with his staff in the Diocese of Dodge City. The team was grateful for the opportunity to discuss the thriving migrant population in the diocese. The diocesan team and several representatives from the Garden City community, including a community liaison and a chaplain from Tyson Foods, an employee from the local public school system, and the vice-mayor of Garden City, were present at the meeting with Bishop Brungardt, Bishop Vincke, and Bishop Tyson.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Diocese of Salina and the Diocese of Dodge City should both review the 2021 CARA studies of the migrant populations in their dioceses. Diocesan representatives should update the information as needed, to ensure that all planning begins with an accurate picture of the population of the diocese.
- A synodal process, in which migrant workers and diocesan/parish staff share ideas and listen to each other, will produce the longest-lasting results. Several employers met with the team during the visit, signaling their willingness to support their employees - employers could be a powerful partner in pastoral care efforts. Make every effort to get more people involved.
- Catholic Charities in Salina has a partnership with a Spanish-speaking immigration attorney in the area and can provide financial assistance for clients seeking her services. The Chief Executive Officer noted it could be very helpful to have a bilingual staff member whose job was to triage inquiries to the appropriate service providers.
- The annual *Encuentro* process of the Diocese of Raleigh was shared. A centrally located parish works with the bishop to host the event, which includes Mass and the Sacrament of Confession. Participants receive free breakfast and lunch, and enjoy games and entertainment. A local physician donates their time to provide free basic check-ups; participants receive free

haircuts, as well as hygiene kits assembled and donated by the local parishes. We proposed a similar event in Salina, and this could bring together service providers, parishes, and volunteers to support the local migrant community.



*Workers stand for a discussion and a blessing in Courtland, Kansas
Photo Credit: Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, USCCB*





Photo Credit: Sr. Joanna Okereke, HHCJ, USCCB



*In addition to harvesting crops, many migrant workers care for farm animals, such as the dairy cows pictured
Photo Credit: Robert Hancock, USCCB*



“The presence of so many people of so many different cultures and religions in so many different parts of the United States has challenged us as a Church to a profound conversion so that we can become truly a sacrament of unity.”

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

Conclusion

The Church's concern for the pastoral care of migrant workers stems from its mission to bring the message of salvation to all peoples (cf. Matthew 28:19). This pastoral concern also stems from the Magisterium's realization that, contrary to more stable populations, migrants have a lifestyle that often causes them to be inadequately cared for by the ordinary pastoral ministries of the parish, and perhaps entirely deprived of these ministries (*Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi*, 2004). This is true of people on the move such as migrant farmworkers and other communities that the PCMRT Subcommittee serves.

These pastoral visits promote awareness of the migrants' realities; they bring the presence of the Church and create connections among those working to meet the pastoral needs of migrant farmworkers. Many migrants fear the loss of income that comes with taking time off for the Sacraments – after all, many of their families, in the United States and abroad, depend on the income they earn and send home. The Church's pastoral plan for migrants must include “movement” on the part of the Church. As Bishop Tyson rightly said during the visit to the Diocese of Yakima: “If they can't come to Mass, we go to them.”¹ Creating opportunities for migrant farmworkers to attend Mass and

meet their spiritual needs, connecting them with the Catholic community around them, is of paramount importance to them. Given the difficult circumstances migrants face, we, as Christians, must challenge ourselves daily to live up to our own religious standards and figure out ways to proactively sensitize hearts and minds – always beginning with our own.

Indeed, PCMRT's migrant farmworker pastoral visits are a great opportunity to bring together groups of national leaders that seek to strengthen the Church's pastoral care in support of the local migrant ministry. In the words of Pope Francis, “...let us unite in prayer for all those who have had to leave their land in search of dignified living conditions. May we journey together with them, be “synodal” together, and entrust them...‘to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a sign of sure hope and consolation to the faithful People of God as they continue their journey’” (*Pope Francis Message for the 110th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 2024). It is important to remember that migrant farmworkers are human beings. As stated in Genesis 1:26-27:

*“God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.”*

Justice calls us to stand in solidarity with migrant farmworkers to change unjust conditions, ensure their contributions are recognized, and guarantee that they are treated fairly.

Given the difficult circumstances migrants face, we must challenge ourselves as Christians to figure out ways to help those in need, with an attitude of mercy and love toward our neighbors. Pope Leo XIV, in his 111th message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, “*Migrants, missionaries of hope*,” calls on all to recognize the inherent dignity of every human being, regardless of their migration status, and especially to show support to people who are forced to leave their homes and places of origin. Our Catholic faith calls us to pray, work, and advocate for protections that allow all workers to thrive. We must uphold Catholic Social Teaching, which values the dignity of work and the rights of workers, promoting an environment where every worker can live with dignity and receive fair treatment. As echoed in the Scriptures, we must seek ways to welcome, support, accompany, encourage and empower migrant farmworkers, who are created in the image of God.

1 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, “Christ in the Heart of the Migrant Farmworker Today: Delegation Trip to Yakima, Washington,” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Farmworker-Delegation-Trip-2023.pdf>, October 2023.

USCCB Subcommittee on Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees, and Travelers

This report was compiled under the auspices of the Secretariat of Cultural Diversity in the Church

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Pastoral Care of Migrants, Refugees and Travelers

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