



This is the first in a series of articles by the CCK Hispanic Committee on the **Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform** which aims to reach beyond the networks of the participating national agencies, and to enlist the support of Catholic individuals and institutions in dioceses throughout the country.

Visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org for more information. Le invitamos a visitar nuestra página con regularidad, debido a que se estará actualizando constantemente con materiales, noticias relevantes y otra información que esperamos sea de su utilidad.

By Ed Monahan



Ed Monahan

In a June 1, 2005 Los Angeles Times Op-Ed entitled, "A Nation That Should Know Better," Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles stated, "Our country stands at a critical point in its history. Our heritage as a nation of immigrants is at stake. We should not attack undocumented workers for our broader problems at the same time we accept their talent, toil and taxes. We should not blockade

our border at the same time that we depend upon the labor of the immigrant nanny, janitor, busboy and agricultural worker. As we have in the past, we should embrace our immigrant roots and recognize that newcomers to our land are not part of the problem, they are part of the solution."

In June 2004, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops resolved to make comprehensive immigration reform, with special emphasis on legalization, a major public policy priority within the Church. The Bishops' *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope Campaign* is designed to unite and mobilize a growing network of Catholic institutions, individuals, and other persons of good faith in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform. Its goal will be to maximize the Church's influence on this issue, consistent with the immigration reform principles enunciated in the bishops' pastoral letter.

The Campaign's primary objectives are to:

- educate the public, especially the Catholic community, including Catholic public officials, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants;
- create political will for positive immigration reform;
- enact legislative and administrative reforms based on the principles articulated by the bishops; and
- organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of the reforms.

In January 2003, the U.S. and Mexican Catholic bishops issued a joint pastoral letter entitled *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. The bishops called for a "globalization of solidarity" and an overhaul of the U.S. immigration system. In the pastoral letter, the U.S. and Mexican bishops outlined several criteria for the reform of the U.S. immigration system, including the following:

- A broad based legalization (permanent residency) of the

undocumented of all nationalities;

- Reform of our family-based immigration system to allow family members to reunite with loved ones in the United States;
- Reform of the employment-based immigration system to provide legal pathways for migrants to come and work in a safe, humane, and orderly manner;
- Abandonment of the border "blockade" enforcement strategy, and
- Restoration of due process protections for immigrants.

Additionally, the bishops recognize that the conditions that compel people to leave their homes out of desperation and lack of opportunities to provide for themselves and their families, must be addressed if an effective and comprehensive response to migration is to be achieved. Therefore, the *Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform* will work closely with the *Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty*, initiated by the USCCB Office of International Justice and Peace and Catholic Relief Services. That Campaign aims to reduce poverty through trade, aid and debt reforms. The *Immigration Reform* and *Global Poverty* campaigns are integrally related in that one addresses the rights and needs of migrants in the U.S., while the other addresses the rights and needs of persons living in their native countries.

Six months after the *Campaign* was launched, the U.S. House of Representatives, in December 2005, passed legislation very harmful to immigrants and to those who serve immigrants. Among many other things, H.R. 4437 criminalizes undocumented presence in the United States, and aid to those who are undocumented. This criminalization of aid extends even to priests and lay volunteers who help to feed and clothe undocumented immigrant families and children in need.

In February 2006 members of the CCK Hispanic Committee and CCK Associate Director Fr. Pat Delahanty visited with the Kentucky staff of Senators McConnell and Bunning about the current legislation in Congress, emphasizing the Campaign's public policy objectives.

These meetings in Kentucky were followed by a March 9, 2006, letter to Senators McConnell and Bunning from the four Catholic Bishops of Kentucky expressing their "deep concern for those who will be affected by proposed changes in our immigration laws being debated now in Congress. Many of those affected currently live in Kentucky and are served by Catholic social service agencies and in parishes throughout the state."

In their letter to the Senators, the four Kentucky Bishops recognized that our immigration system is in serious need of repair and that this has created a climate fostering an unwelcome response to immigrants.

In their letter to the Senators, the four Kentucky Bishops recognized that our immigration system is in serious need of repair and that this has created a climate fostering an unwelcome response to immigrants.

The Bishops' indicated to the Senators that their interest in the welfare of immigrants "is rooted in Scripture, where, in



Five hundred demonstrators marched on April 4, 2006, outside the Gene Snyder Federal Courthouse in Louisville to support comprehensive immigration reform that provides a path to legalization.

the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls upon us to 'welcome the stranger,' for 'what you do to the least of my brethren, you do unto me' (Mt: 25-35, 40). "We know that each of us will be judged by how we treat the poor, the vulnerable, and the stranger. Jesus, Himself, was a refugee," said Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly O.P., Chair of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Board of Directors, said, "We see Him in the face of migrants. As we decide this vital public policy for our country, let our discourse be civil and our solution reflect that each person is made in the image and likeness of God."

As a matter of justice, the four Kentucky Bishops asked Senators McConnell and Bunning to work to have the legislation currently being debated in the Senate Judiciary Committee include provisions that accomplish the following:

- 1) a broad-based legalization of the undocumented;
- 2) a temporary worker program with appropriate protections for both U.S. and foreign workers;
- 3) changes to the family-based immigration system to reduce waiting times for family reunification; and
- 4) restoration of due process for immigrants.

The four Kentucky Bishops further called upon Congress to address the root causes of migration, such as the poverty so prevalent in the countries which send immigrants here.

April 2006

Action: Join Catholic Conference of KY's legislative advocacy network to influence immigration public policy, www.ccky.org.

Bishops call on the local church to help newcomers integrate in ways that are respectful, that celebrate their cultures, and that are responsive to their social needs, leading to a mutual enrichment of the local church.



1042 Burlington Lane
Frankfort Kentucky 40601
502.875-4345
cckstaff@ccky.org

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops, established in 1968. It speaks for the Church in matters of public policy, serves as liaison to government and the legislature, and coordinates communications and activities between the church and secular agencies. There are 388,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.