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KY Bishops ask that immigrants, both legal and undocumented, be seen as the image God

(Frankfort - August 28, 2006) The four Catholic Bishops of KY today released a pastoral Statement on immigration, *Every Man and Woman is the Image of God*.

In releasing the statement, the KY Bishops acknowledge the controversial nature of the public policy debate about immigration. Nonetheless, they invite Catholics and other Kentuckians to assess this crisis in light of Scripture and the moral demands of the Gospel, and not rely only on the narrow framework of civil law.

They challenge believers to propose a solution to the crisis that recognizes that those who come to this country are our brothers and sisters. “We respect the right of nations to enforce their borders and to enforce reasonable immigration laws. At the same time, we regard every person, illegal immigrant, legal immigrant, or citizen, with the mind of Christ: a human person worthy of dignity and respect.” The KY Bishops emphasized Pope John Paul II’s teaching, “For Christians, the migrant is not merely an individual to be respected in accordance with the norms established by law, but a person whose presence challenges them and whose needs become an obligation for their responsibility. ‘What have you done to your brother?’ (cf. Gn 4:9). The answer should not be limited to what is imposed by law, but should be made in the manner of solidarity.”

In 2006 Pope Benedict XVI called us to see that “every man and woman is the image of God.” Joining that call, The KY Bishops “invite Catholics and all Kentuckians to welcome the beneficial aspects of migration, to overcome every form of discrimination, injustice and contempt of the persons coming to our land, for every immigrant is the image of God. We especially invite Catholics to work for the just treatment in our laws of the children of God who are immigrants.”

In their appeal for responsible, comprehensive reform of the immigration system, the four KY Bishops stated that as “a matter of justice,” the solution should include the following elements:

1. a broad-based earned legalization of undocumented persons;
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.

Currently, only the Senate passed bill approaches the standard of justice that the pastoral statement calls for. The bishops urge lawmakers to produce a final product respecting the dignity of all immigrants.

Our nation’s important public policy debate is best done when it promotes the dignity of every person. “We see Him in the face of migrants. As we work to secure a public policy that treats immigrants justly,” the Bishops said, “let our discourse be civil and our solutions reflect that each person is the image and likeness of God.”

Every Man and Woman is the Image of God is found at: www.ccky.org/justice_for_immigrants.htm.

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The Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) is an agency of the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, 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 406,000 Catholics in the Commonwealth. The Bishops of the four dioceses of KY constitute CCK's Board of Directors.