

Focus on Kentucky: The Rights of Immigrant Workers

Foreign born residents comprise over 2% of Kentucky's population. Many came to Kentucky to work in the tobacco fields, horse industry, construction, restaurant work, poultry processing, landscaping and manufacturing. Immigrant workers have a great economic impact on Kentucky as consumers and as state and local taxpayers.

U.S. labor law protects all workers—whether citizens, legal permanent residents or undocumented workers. But, because most immigrant workers do not know the system, they remain vulnerable to:

- unscrupulous employers;
- harassment; and
- discrimination.

Public Policy

All workers have a right to respect and fair treatment, and Kentucky law should reflect that. Because nearly every worker must drive to work, Kentuckians should advocate that all workers, including those who are undocumented, have access to driver licenses. Kentuckians would be safer if all drivers were tested, knew the rules of the road, and were able to buy insurance.

For More Information:

Visit the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services: www.usccb.org/mrs/index.htm.



For Discussion and Reflection

1. In what ways do I respond to the sufferings of others in less developed countries from AIDS, hunger or natural disasters?
2. What can I do as a consumer to discourage sweatshops, child labor and the exploitation of women in the global market?
3. How should immigration law change to accommodate migrant farm workers and service workers so essential to the U.S. economy?
4. How does investment in the stock market relate to the economic life of less developed countries? List the positives and negatives.
5. What is the difference between free trade and fair trade? What policies would you recommend to ensure fair trade?
6. List some ways we in the U.S. can discourage military solutions, and encourage non-violent resolutions, to international problems.
7. From a Christian perspective, what should be the role of the U.S. in the world?

Scripture Meditations

Isaiah 2:1-5 ■ Galatians 3:28
Luke 10:29-37 ■ Matthew 5:38-48



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Economic Justice
in 21st Century Kentucky:
Holding Ourselves Accountable
**6—What Borders Are
You Talking About?**



Solidarity

Compassion Across Continents

News reports move our hearts when we see victims of :

- a famine in Africa;
- a hurricane in Haiti; or
- an earthquake in Peru.

We know our brothers and sisters across the globe have a claim on us, because we constitute one human family. And, we respond.

The principle of **solidarity** recognizes that "loving your neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.



A More Just World

In practical terms solidarity also extends to building a world based on justice.

Establishing Fair Trade Agreements. In the global economy less developed countries depend on fair trade to provide a better standard of living for their citizens. Conversely, these countries suffer from trade agreements negotiated to the advantage of the rich.

Pursuing Paths to Peace. Treaties to eliminate nuclear arms, land mines, biological and chemical weapons demand respect among all nations. Threats of genocide and human rights abuses beg the world community to intervene under the authorization of the United Nations.

Eliminating Racism. Racism promotes the superiority of one race or ethnic group over another. Racism is a sin.

Scripture Speaks



Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34–35)

If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. (1 Cor. 12:26)



The tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to him, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain saying, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1–2)

People in Kentucky

Although the Principle of Solidarity relates more to social justice on an international scale, some people reflect similar struggles right here in Kentucky.

- World-wide, millions of people emigrate from their countries seeking a better life. Kentucky has seen an increasing rise of undocumented workers in factories and fields, with their number estimated in 2004 at over 25,000.
- Globally, HIV/AIDS has devastated sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world. As 2004 began, Kentucky recorded 1,843 people dead from HIV/AIDS and 2,228 people living with it.
- In addition, thousands of people in Kentucky understand the global economy since they watched their jobs move overseas because of trade agreements.

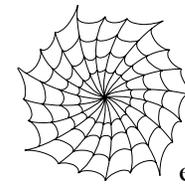
The Church Teaches

Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility toward those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves.... It is a duty in solidarity and charity.... *Direct aid* is an appropriate response to immediate, extraordinary needs caused by natural catastrophes, epidemics and the like.... It is also necessary to *reform* international economic and financial *institutions* so that they will better promote equitable relationships with less advanced countries. Cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 16. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2439, 2440.



Positive signs in the contemporary world are the growing awareness of the solidarity of the poor among themselves, their efforts to support one another and their public demonstrations on the social scene which, without recourse to violence, present their own needs and rights in the face of the inefficiency or corruption of the public authorities. By virtue of her own evangelical duty, the church feels called to take her stand beside the poor.

John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 39.



We cherish this hope: that distrust and selfishness among nations will eventually be overcome by a stronger desire for mutual collaboration and a heightened sense of solidarity.

Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n. 64.