



Colorado Catholic Conference

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Bishops' Statement in Support of Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Migration to Colorado, specifically from her neighbors to the south, is not a new development in our state's history. For a variety of reasons, the significance of this issue has dramatically increased within the past few years. Catholics across the state have written us directly, offering their views on immigration in a manner which demonstrates the passion and concern this issue generates.

We acknowledge the complexity of the issue, and the very real cultural, political, social, and economic challenges that the host and migrating populations face. However, the magnitude of these challenges is not a license to engage in angry rhetoric or to implement policies based on fear. The challenges immigration presents are not insurmountable. With the Gospels as our guide, we can find common ground that promotes the dignity of the human person and protects the centrality of the family.

We should first remember, as Pope John Paul II said in 2004, that the right *not* to emigrate must be safeguarded; that is, the right to live in peace and dignity in one's home country, with basic needs of housing, health care, housing, and education satisfied. When this right is frustrated and these needs not satisfied, many people are forced to leave their homeland, at great risk to themselves and their families.

Second, the right of all persons to migrate to seek work that satisfies basic human needs is central to the Church's understanding of human dignity; yet this right is not absolute. We respect the struggles of law enforcement personnel who seek to preserve the common good without violating the dignity of the migrant. Further, every nation has the right, and duty to control the migration process to prevent unnecessary loss of human life, and eliminate the flow of illegal drugs and human trafficking.

Third, history teaches us that migration offers different cultures the opportunity to discover common values, promote peace and cooperation, and to appreciate the contributions migrants offer their new country. When the contributions migrants make are recognized, migration can foster a future of peace for all persons by facilitating interaction and understanding between cultures, individuals, and countries. As Catholics, we are judged as a community of faith by how we treat the most vulnerable among us, from the unborn child, to the jobless single mother, to the migrant worker separated from his or her family. All Catholics have the obligation to be peacemakers, especially within their own parishes.

We, the Catholic bishops of Colorado, are increasingly concerned about the divisive tone of this important debate. We hope that thoughtful and reasonable

discussion can lead to meaningful reforms of our country's immigration laws that protect the common good and enhance the dignity of the human person. Later this year, we will issue our first pastoral statement to Catholics in Colorado on immigration. In addition, each diocese will sponsor a variety of activities this year, including the March 18 Immigration Symposium, for the purpose of sharing with the faithful the Catholic Church's teachings on these matters, and to encourage Catholics to take appropriate action to build a more just immigration system.