



**IMMIGRATION**

**What we see:** A lack of economic opportunity, often fueled by U.S. trade and investment policies, is escalating pressure for many people living on the margins of society to migrate. At the same time, the United States is increasingly dependent on migrant labor. Nevertheless, existing policies and practices in the United States, including mass deportations, criminalization of migrants, and militarization of the southwest border, are pushing migrants deeper into the shadows of society, keeping them in a semi-permanent state of insecurity and vulnerability.

- Close to 3,000 migrant deaths were recorded between 1998 and 2005, with numbers increasing every year.
- Between 8.5 and 12 million undocumented workers live and work in the United States.
- Over 22,000 people are held in immigration detention on any given day. They are held in hundreds of local prisons, jails, and private contract facilities throughout the U.S. and are typically subjected to arbitrary punishment, including neglect of basic medical and hygienic needs and sexual abuse.
- According to the National Immigration Forum, the average immigrant will pay an estimated \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in local, state, and federal benefits over their lifetimes. According to the World Bank, global remittances by migrants were \$167 billion in 2005.

**What our faith tells us:** Our faith mandates us to welcome the stranger. In his 2009 encyclical, Pope Benedict XVI calls for migration policies focused toward “safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries.” Catholic Social Teaching affirms the right to migrate, but also the right to not have to migrate. We must welcome migrants into our communities and places of worship while working with other countries to address the root causes of migration, including economic injustice, environmental catastrophes, armed conflicts, and religious or political persecution.

**What we hope for:** A just immigration policy must holistically address the root causes of migration, and respect the basic human dignity and rights of migrants regardless of their country of origin or their legal status.

**Legislation:** We call on Congress to enact legislation on immigration that includes:

- Provisions for timely family reunification.
- Opportunities for hard-working migrants already in the U.S. to regularize their status through a system that is simple, fair, and accessible and provides avenues to citizenship for those that desire it.
- Effective oversight mechanisms that support community security, human rights and accountability, particularly in the U.S.-Mexico border region.
- A safe and dignified way for future migrants to enter and work in the country legally.