



# THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF PUBLIC POLICY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

RESPECT LIFE ~ JUSTICE & PEACE ~ PARISH ORGANIZING ~ RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ~ CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
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## STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM ARCHBISHOP GEORGE NIEDERAUER AND BISHOP WILLIAM JUSTICE MAY 11, 2010

As bishops and priests we often hear the stories of our people who have emigrated here to the United States of America. In our experience, these are good and decent people whose only aspiration is to live in some dignity and raise their families to have a future of hope. We hear the stories of the overwhelming poverty that they came from in their country of origin. We sometimes hear stories of violence and even persecution that they escaped.

These personal stories remind us of our own stories, of Irish and Italian, Poles and Germans who came to these shores many years ago for much the same reasons- people seeking a better life, free from debilitating poverty and want.

We know and respect these good people because they pray in our churches with us and they send their children to our schools.

Many of them are undocumented. Many have been here for decades, raised families, started businesses. It is our belief as their pastors that they should be given a chance to right the wrong of their undocumented status. This should not be an “amnesty.” Nor are we asking for “open borders.” As Bishop John Wester, formerly of San Francisco, and now Bishop of the Diocese of Salt Lake City and chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration said recently:

***The U.S. bishops’ prescription for mending our broken system is to bring the 11 million undocumented out of the shadows, register them with the government, require them to pay a fine and any taxes owed, and require them to learn English and work as they wait in the back of the line for a chance for citizenship. .... The U.S. bishops would also support an increase in family-based and employment-based visas so that immigrant families could migrate to the United States in a safe, legal and controlled manner, and not be subject to the abuse of human smugglers or to death in the desert. It is our view that making changes to the legal immigration system will help ease pressure on our border by taking undocumented immigrants out of the enforcement equation, freeing up law enforcement to focus upon those who are here to harm us — drug smugglers, human traffickers, and would be terrorists — and not those simply looking for a job. We also believe.... that Congress should examine how the root causes of migration can be addressed, so that migrants can stay where they are and work in dignity.***

As we listen to and hear the stories of our undocumented brothers and sisters here in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, let us treat them with respect and dignity and let their stories move us to work with our elected officials in Washington, D.C. to make real and reasonable immigration reform. Reform legislation is long overdue and there can be no better time than now to change our immigration laws to bring these people out of the shadows and into the light.