

***Statement of Roman Catholic Bishops of Michigan
on Federal Immigration Legislation
April 29, 2007***

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops of the state of Michigan, wish to add our voices to the ongoing public debate regarding the rights and responsibilities of immigrants, particularly those of Hispanic descent. As shepherds who understand the needs of our people, we speak in communion with all the Bishops of our nation. We also build on the long-standing social justice tradition of our Church, a tradition which teaches the dignity of every person and our responsibility to work against any injustices which would compromise the dignity of immigrants, especially workers and their families.

For the sake of justice toward immigrant laborers, we propose that the laws of our nation should conform to the following principles:

1. *Immigration legislation should permit the prompt reunification of families.* Our current immigration system imposes an unbearable burden upon the families of many immigrants. Spouses and minor children of permanent residents working in the United States often wait eight years in order to receive a visa necessary for the reunification of the family. The law itself places workers in the position of having to make an impossible choice: they must choose between immigrating to the United States *without* documentation and, therefore, *without* the protection of their rights *or* working within the legal system but at the expense of an indefinite separation from their families.
2. *Immigration legislation should open a path toward the legalization of undocumented workers currently living and working in the United States.* The economy of the United States enjoys the benefits of immigrant workers but without providing recognition of their dignity as workers. Legalization should not impose intolerable burdens on workers—such as severe monetary sanctions and family separations.
3. *Immigration legislation should create an efficient system for the future entrance of temporary workers as well as permanent legal residents.* Justice requires that immigrant workers have the same benefits, salaries, and labor protections enjoyed by other American workers. Immigration reform should facilitate the unity of families and allow workers the possibility of secure movement from the United States to the land of their birth. While the Church recognizes the importance of secure borders, such concerns can be addressed without jeopardizing good and respectful working relationships among employers and employees, whether they are from the United States or from another country.

We invite everyone—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—to take an active part in the promotion of a just and realistic reform of the immigration system in the United States. We ought to make known to our representatives in Congress the urgency of this problem with hopes that they will, *this year*, arrive at a real solution.

On May 1, we celebrate the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker. We look to Saint Joseph as the husband of Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, the guardian of the child Jesus and a humble laborer, a carpenter. As St. Matthew's Gospel reminds us, the Holy Family knew firsthand the experience of migrant peoples; they also modeled the dignity of human labor and the sanctity of family living. As we celebrate this feast and many gather around the world to affirm the dignity and rights of workers, in a special way, we join our voices with those of the Hispanic immigrant workers. We thank God for their presence and gifts, and pledge to work together with all people of goodwill for the recognition of their civic rights.

His Eminence Adam Cardinal Maida
Archbishop of Detroit

Most Reverend Patrick R. Cooney
Diocese of Gaylord

Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Diocese of Grand Rapids

Most Reverend James A. Murray
Diocese of Kalamazoo

Most Reverend Carl F. Mengeling
Diocese of Lansing

Most Reverend Alexander K. Sample
Diocese of Marquette

Most Reverend Robert J. Carlson
Diocese of Saginaw