

**“Justice for Immigrants”:
Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform
May 9, 2005
Most Rev. John R. Manz, Auxiliary Bishop**

Good afternoon, everyone. I am a member of the Migration and Refugee Services Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, so I have been involved in the bishops’ immigration efforts for a number of years. I am pleased to see this launch of the *Justice for Immigrants* campaign and of our own Archdiocesan efforts to implement it. The goals for this multi-year campaign are four-fold:

- To educate Catholics and other willing participants about the benefits of immigrants to our nation;
- To strengthen public opinion about the positive contributions of immigrants;
- To advocate for just immigration laws which promote legal status and legal pathways for immigrant workers and their families to migrate in a safe, humane and orderly way;
- To organize Catholic legal networks to assist immigrants to access the benefits of reforms.

So we are trying to do our own homework and let Catholics know what the Church teaches about immigration in the cacophony of disparate voices.

There will be a special website set up – [linked later tomorrow](#) to the Archdiocese of Chicago’s own website at www.archchicago.org – which will offer educational materials for use and review by Catholics and by Catholic parishes. Some of our own local information and resources on this topic are include in your packets today.

We know that immigrants and their families build, clean, feed, and care for our country and that America is a place that respects families that work hard, pay taxes, and obey the law. When we live up to our greatest ideals, we welcome immigrants seeking a better life. However, as Bishop Garcia-Siller has already mentioned, our immigration system is broken and needs to be fixed. Our immigration laws are outdated and unenforceable. This broken system forces many immigrant families to be separated from loved ones for years, even decades. We, especially, need to change the laws that separate families.

Our nation needs a controlled immigration system that would replace an illegal immigration flow with a legal immigration system that is consistent with the basic American values of fairness and equal treatment under the law. The bishops recognize national security is an important point that needs to be underscored. By allowing immigrant workers to register in a systematic way, the United States could improve its security, knowing who is coming and who is here.

Our faith community brings three major assets to the challenge of immigration issues. First, we bring a consistent moral framework of teaching that respects the human dignity of all. Second, we bring our broad and everyday experience of serving the immigrant community's need. Third, we are a large and diverse community made up of CEOs and migrant farm workers, legislators and union members, that bring a range of assets to the discussion.

The Catholic Church is one of the largest providers of services to immigrants so we know first-hand the problems that exist. Over the years the Archdiocese has worked on immigration and refugee issues ranging from the payment to Braceros to

the racial profiling of immigrants, to the protection of Colombian and Sudanese refugees to the right for Mexican-born students raised here to get in-state tuition. Each year the Archdiocese funds immigration reform issues through the Catholic Campaign for Human Development grants so that justice is served.

As legislation is introduced, Catholic leadership will evaluate and consider input into any immigration reform. Part of our efforts will be to call on our national and Illinois leaders to work together in a bi-partisan fashion. By working together they can fix our broken immigration system in a way that respects the human dignity of all and redeems the American Dream. We recognize that Americans want to make sure that any legislation that is passed by Congress in the coming year needs to meet the test of fairness that Americans expect.

Bishop Garcia-Siller and myself, like those at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops tomorrow, come to you as bishops and teachers, not as politicians or policy experts. But we do hope that we can help to change the paradigm of the present conversation about immigrants in our nation. We will strive to lift up the gospel mandate to love our neighbor and welcome the stranger so that there is justice for immigrants.

Thank you for coming. We are now open to take any questions you may have.