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|  | **Migration And Immigration:****Legal And Illegal Human Rights** |
| What’s the Point? | Immigration is not just an American problem. The crisis of immigration is world-wide and as such concerns the world-wide Church. God tells us that how we deal with immigrants, legal or otherwise bears upon us as a nation (c.f. scriptures below). War, famine, oppression and other such moral evils create entire generations of displaced peoples. How we think about the migrant, the immigrant, and the displaced should be very similar. We are all pilgrims. |
| **Background Information** | ***Reference**** ***CCC****: ¶* *2241, 2433*
* **NAB** : *: Ex 23:9; Deut 10:17-19, 24:14-15, 26:5-13; Lev 19 (esp. 33-34); Tobit 4: 7-8; Prov 31: 8-9; Mt 2:1-23, 25: 35-40*

What a difference just a few years make! When we introduced this topic into the curriculum, migrant workers were a standard in the farming communities around us. Now our ranks swell with immigrants and several states have passed laws restricting immigration and the rights of even citizens who look ‘suspicious’ or different. Alabama passed the most restrictive laws in the country and while some aspects have not held up in court, many have. Representative Micky Hammon, the legislator partially responsible for the language of the law called “*Today’s ruling…nothing short of a great victory for the State of Alabama and for those who support the rule of law. Many of the law’s most vocal critics, including the Obama Justice Department, the ACLU and other liberal extremists, were simply proven wrong today. We are quickly learning that once you cut through the rhetoric of those who seek to protect illegal immigrants, there are no facts to support their outlandish claims against this statute*.” (*The Huntsville Times*, September 28, 2011)Of course the irony for us being that the Catholic bishops, Baker and Rodi of Alabama, were some of the primary outspoken “*liberal extremists*” who opposed the law to “*protect illegal immigrants*” with their “*outlandish claims against this statute*” by bringing suit against the State. But why? What does the Church have to do with the political and economic problems of Alabama?The answer is simple. The Bible is full of references to ‘the alien’. Of the images within Scripture the one of the visitor, the alien, is one of the most striking because it is a self-identification. The Hebrews were aliens. They were aliens in Egypt; they were aliens in the Holy Land; they were aliens in Babylon. We continue that tradition and thinking. We are the “*pilgrim Church on earth*,” (EP 3).When God gave the Holy Land to Israel he told them they were but tenants, aliens upon it (*Lev* 25:23), codifying this within the ‘Year of Jubilee’, proclaiming and celebrating it within the Passover service. We are seen as just passing through (*1Pt* 2:11), that this journey of life is but a wandering in the desert. Even “*the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head*.” (*Lk* 9:58) All the more so are we merely ‘resident aliens’ here in the United States (*CCC* 2240).The ability for people to move freely among the resources of the planet, to have access to protection, opportunities, and services which will provide dignity to their lives is an important right but one which must be balanced for all people. The position of the Church is easily stated, but questions always exist, questions of sedition, where the Church is seen as inviting in and aiding its own ranks, that is, helping the immigrant in order to bolster its own numbers. Perhaps that would be true, if it were true. Certainly in the last century the number of Catholic immigrants have swelled the ranks of Americans, but the Church has never supported an untenable immigration policy. The point is that the resources of the world are to be shared by all, regardless of race, creed, color, or place of origin.Even Jesus was a refugee; Matthew chapter 2 tells us that Joseph took his family and fled to Egypt to escape Herod. They dwelt there until it was safe to come back…sounds just like the millions who live in camps far away from their homes.There are many types of immigration, some voluntary, some not. The free movement of peoples is important and that is not just freedom to move away but also the freedom to move back.So, in order to make things clear let us explore the Church’s position.**Where the Church Stands:*** The Catholic Church in the United States does not support ‘open borders’, illegal immigration, or an “amnesty” that would carte blanch grant legal status to all unauthorized immigrants outside of any accepted legal boundaries.
* This is because the Catholic Church believes nations have a legitimate responsibility to promote the common good by denying admission to certain migrants and by regulating the flow of all those who are seeking to enter.
* That said, the current US immigration system is badly in need of reform (as well as that of many other Western nations).
* The Catholic Church does not believe that criminal prosecution and deportation of unauthorized immigrants offer a viable approach to the problem.
* What it does believe is that doing nothing creates and would facilitate the growth of a population of second-class noncitizens with limited rights, few prospects, or security subject to exploitation.
* “It is against the common good and unacceptable to have a double society, one visible with rights and one invisible without rights — a voiceless underground of undocumented persons.” (US Bishops, 1986)

***Why does the Church care about immigration policies?*** Especially in America, where are truly and immigrant Church, the Catholic Church has historically held a strong interest in immigration and how public policy affects immigrants who are both seeking a new life in the United States or seeking to better their status in their native countries by coming to the United States. Based on Scriptural and Catholic social teachings, as well as her own experience as an immigrant Church in the United States, the Catholic Church is compelled to raise her voice on behalf of those who are marginalized and whose God-given rights are not respected.The Church believes that current immigration laws and policies have often led to the undermining of immigrants’ human dignity and have kept families apart. The existing immigration system has resulted in a growing number of persons in this country in an unauthorized capacity, living in the shadows as they toil in jobs that would otherwise go unfilled. Close family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents must wait years for a visa to be reunited. And, our nation’s border enforcement strategies have been ineffective and have led to the death of thousands of migrants. The Church has a responsibility to shine the message of God on this issue and help to build bridges between all parties so that an immigration system can be created that is just for all and serves the common good, including the legitimate security concerns of our nation***Does the Catholic Church support illegal immigration?***The Catholic Bishops do not condone unlawful entry or circumventions of our nation’s immigration laws. The bishops believe that reforms are necessary in order for our nation’s immigration system to respond to the realities of separated families and labor demands that compel people to immigrate to the United States, whether in an authorized or unauthorized fashion. Our nation’s economy demands foreign labor, yet there are insufficient visas to meet this demand. Close family members of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents face interminable separations, sometimes of twenty years or longer, due to backlogs of available visas. U.S. immigration laws and policies need to be updated to reflect these realties. ***Are Undocumented Immigrants Entitled to Any Federal Government Services?***While immigrants who are not here legally are ineligible for nearly all federal benefits, they are still eligible for certain very basic kinds of assistance, including: emergency Medicaid, immunizations, testing and treatment for the symptoms of communicable diseases, short-term non-cash disaster relief, school lunches and breakfasts, and certain other programs essential to public health and safety.**The Last Word**“*The U.S. bishops have reaffirmed several basic immigration principles. First, persons fleeing persecution have a special standing and thus require special consideration as emigrants. Second, workers have the right to live and work without exploitation. Third, family reunification remains an appropriate basis for just immigration policy. Fourth, every effort should be made to encourage and enable highly skilled and educated persons to remain in or return to their homelands. Fifth, efforts to stem migration that do not effectively address its root causes are not only ineffectual, but permit the continuation of the political, social, and economic inequities that cause it*.” ***Political Responsibility p. 24 (source www.usccb.org)***While it may not seem like it immigration is linked to any movement of peoples, no matter what the cause. This is because the needs are the same. Marginalization is not an excuse to pretend people do not exist. |
| Materials Needed | * PowerPoint
* Computer
* Overhead projector
* Paper, blank badges or sticky pads, pencils, poster sheets, markers
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| **Attention Grabber** | **(10 min)** |
| ***None*** |
| **Outline** | **Prayer**:  | *Matthew 2:1-23 or Deut. 10:17-19.* |
| **Presentation**:  | *PowerPoint.* |
| **Activity**:  | *None* |
| **Table Discussion**:  | *Questions*. |
| **Post Discussion:** | *None* |
| **Closing Prayer**:  | *Group Prayer/Petitions.* |
| **Prayer** | **Introductory Prayer:** (**2 min,** after candle is lit…**)*****Matthew 2:1-23****When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him.” Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”**.****Deut. 10:17-19****For the LORD, your God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes, who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the resident alien, giving them food and clothing. So you too should love the resident alien, for that is what you were in the land of Egypt.* |
| **Pre-discussion Presentation** | (15 min) |
|  | **Who Is My Neighbor?**See PowerPoint. |
| **Activity / Table Talk** | Table Discussion (35 min) |
|  | QUESTIONS:1. Do you have an immigrate story to tell?
2. Do you feel differently about, for example, Caucasian undocumented immigrants than Hispanic or Asian immigrants? What would you think of 500,000 Irish immigrants versus 500,000 Mexican immigrants? If you are for instant deportation of illegal immigrations is it due to racism?
3. Are immigrants good or bad for the economy? Do they provide a net gain or net loss to tax receipts? Do they take U.S. jobs?
4. What if the situation was reversed?
5. What do you think of mandatory English requirements?
6. What should we do about the problem? Immediate deportation regardless of mixed family status? Amnesty? Sponsorship (citizenship children with undocumented parents)?
7. What would happen to our population if we didn’t have easy legal or even illegal immigration? What would happen to our economy if we had a net loss of population?
8. What about people in refugee camps? If they come back to their home countries what economic effect would that have?
9. Do displaced peoples have the right to return to their home countries? How would you feel if all of the American Indians suddenly laid claim to your house?
10. Does the Church’s position on immigration help or hinder the political debate?
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| Post-Discussion Activity | **(0 min).**  |
|  | None. |
| Closing | **Announcements and Prayer (5 min).**  |
|  | **Group Prayer**Intercessions  |
| Reminder | **\*\*\*\* REMEMBER IMPORTANCE OF RECORDING ATTENDANCE!!** This is a legal document! Please, write down on your attendance sheet the name of any teen at your table, whether they are on your roll or not. |
| Attachments | **Below:*** *Pope Says Christians Should Give Priority Attention to Migrants*
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**Pope Says Christians Should Give Priority Attention to Migrants**

By John Thavis - Catholic News Service, Oct 8, 2008

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Appealing on behalf of the world's migrants, Pope Benedict XVI said Christians should put their faith into action and give priority attention to refugees and immigrants.

The pope said St. Paul -- a "missionary to migrants" -- should inspire Christians to show solidarity with the diverse world of today's migrants, including the "victims of modern forms of slavery" and human trafficking.

The pope made the comments in his annual message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, which will be celebrated Jan. 18. The papal text was released at the Vatican Oct. 8.

The pope's theme, "St. Paul: Migrant, Apostle of the Peoples," echoed the current jubilee year dedicated to the 2,000th anniversary of the saint's birth.

Traveling far and wide, St. Paul made himself an ambassador-at-large for Christ and a "migrant by vocation," the pope said. In doing so, the saint understood the hardships of migrants and the importance of taking the Gospel to the most diverse populations, the pope said.

St. Paul thus anticipated the church's mission in the modern age of globalization, a mission aimed at the many groups of migrants: students far from home, displaced people, immigrants, refugees, evacuees and those exploited in human trafficking, the pope said.

He said St. Paul's letters present a model of a church that "was not exclusive but on the contrary open to all, formed by believers without distinction of culture or race."

This model also was based on fraternal solidarity expressed in "daily gestures of sharing," demonstrating that the Gospel must be listened to, welcomed and lived, he said.

If Christians understand this, they cannot fail to show special concern for refugees and the displaced, the pope said.

"How can we fail to meet the needs of those who are de facto the weakest and most defenseless, marked by precariousness and insecurity, marginalized and often excluded by society?" he said.

The church should give its priority attention to them, the pope said, citing St. Paul's words in his First Letter to the Corinthians that "God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."

He said the church's celebration of the annual migrant day should help its members "live brotherly love to the full without making any kind of distinction and without discrimination," remembering that "anyone who needs us and whom we can help is our neighbor."

St. Paul's example helps people understand that "the exercise of charity is the culmination and synthesis of the whole of Christian life," he said.

At a Vatican press conference, Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers, said there were more than 200 million migrants in the world, many of them driven from their homelands by war, famine or economic necessity.

The phenomenon has shown itself to be unstoppable, and has prompted a "climate of closure" in some richer countries, the cardinal said. He said the proper response was not for countries to close their borders, but to welcome immigrants with balanced and fair regulation.

Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, secretary of the pontifical council, said new measures aimed at keeping immigrants out of richer countries have led to an "erosion of humanitarian standards." He criticized the publication of lists of "safe countries" of origin when dealing with asylum seekers.