



Call to Justice: “JusticeGram” of the Salvatorian Family USA

Welcome the Stranger Among Us

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“Being an immigrant is such a disorienting experience,” said Fr. Marcel Emeh, SDS. “As an immigrant, I often feel like a fish out of water.”

Fr. Marcel, originally from Nigeria, has had to grapple with US immigration policy and practice, and it’s not been easy. “Statistically, fewer than 10 out of 100 applicants from Nigeria each day are approved. So many Nigerians I know have come to believe it is easier to go to Heaven than to go to America.”

The United States has a very long history of immigration. Indigenous people of the continent would argue that all who have ancestral roots in *any* place other than on this continent are immigrants. Moreover, the reasons for being an immigrant today are not much different from what they’ve been throughout history.

“It is vital to understand the *who and why* of immigration,” noted Sister Darlene Pienschke. Her experience with recent asylum seekers in Tucson, AZ has brought the goodness and kindness of Jesus our Savior to many. “Understanding the *why* is not always

easy to do,” she said. There are reasons that “push” people out of their homeland, and there are reasons that “pull” people into another country.

Sister Darlene also pointed out that while an “immigrant” is one entering a country, it is important to understand that there are diverse groups of people immigrating at any given time. Many sources consider three different groups of people coming into the United States.

- ♦ **Migrants** are people who come to the country seeking work. Many have an “essential worker” qualification. Wages earned here are often sent back home to families. Others are professionals migrating to a country to fill jobs that would otherwise go unfilled.
 - ♦ Others are **asylum seekers**. These face violence or even life threats for a variety of reasons (religion, race, culture, political beliefs).
 - ♦ And others are **refugees**, who have often lost their land, homes, etc. due to warfare and natural disaster. They no longer have a home to go to and are seeking refuge in a different country.
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Being an Immigrant

Fr. Marcel Emeh, SDS

As a Nigerian citizen, I know that getting a U.S visa from American Embassy in Nigeria is always a nightmare. So, I was lucky that I got my U.S. visa from the American Embassy in Rome. Nevertheless, the experience was not an easy one for me.

My worst experience of being an immigrant here in the U.S was when my 82 year old father was denied a visitor's visa to attend my priestly



<https://justiceforimmigrants.org/video-rosary-for-vulnerable-migrant-populations/>

ordination in 2018. The immigration officer who interviewed my father asked him about his travelling experiences. My father responded that he had none. Then the officer told him that he is not qualified for that visa. (We) consulted an immigration attorney to ... appeal. The attorney told us that a visitor's visa ... cannot be appealed ... whatever the consular officer at (the) U.S Embassy decides, that holds. I was so helpless, disappointed and frustrated.

“... immigration is a very complicated issue. Strictly speaking no one wants to leave his or her home without a serious reason to go to an alien place. Most of the (undocumented) immigrants are motivated or forced by situations which are very complicated, like unemployment, poverty and safety.

“It is our duty to look at them as human beings. Their dignity should be respected, and a proper treatment should be given to them.”



What does Catholic Social Teaching Say about Immigration?

“A rich body of Church teaching, including Papal encyclicals, Bishops’ Statements and pastoral letters, has consistently reinforced our moral obligation to treat the stranger as we would treat Christ himself.” [USCCB website]

Learn more about the Church’s teaching on immigration at this link: <https://www.usccb.org/committees/migration/immigration> .

Immigration and COVID-19

Migrant workers and refugees are often “essential workers.” Most Rev. Mario Dorsonville, Auxiliary Bishop of Washington and Chair of the Committee on Migration of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) prepared written testimony for the House Judiciary Committee in which he presented extensive data highlighting the contributions of immigrants and refugees in the workforce. Their work in food production, healthcare, supply chain, and home health care has been “tremendous and vital” during the country’s response to COVID-19.

USCCB has organized reference documents pertaining to COVID-19 and immigration issues. You can access it at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/covid-19-resource-page/>

Policy and practice issues reflecting the realities of the coronavirus Pandemic include:

- ◆ Detention Conditions
- ◆ COVID-19 Funding
- ◆ Unaccompanied Children
- ◆ Migrant Workers
- ◆ Response to Presidential Proclamation on Suspending Immigration
- ◆ COVID-19 and Refugee Resettlement
- ◆ Rosary for Vulnerable Migrant Populations
- ◆ USCCB COVID-19 Prayer Resources

Salvatorians Respond to Immigrant Needs

Living and ministering close to the southern border, Sisters Darlene Pienschke and Rita Vogelsang can consider immigration realities from a unique perspective. Here are some critical insights from an interview conversation:

What are your thoughts on our current immigration policy, based on what you experience in Arizona?

- At Casa Alitas, we work with asylum seekers. They are **escaping life-threatening realities**; they aren't really thinking about US immigration policy. They just need to escape no matter what.



- Right now, other than essentially "closing" the borders (requiring even otherwise eligible immigrants to stay in camps on the Mexican side of the border), **there isn't a clear or consistent immigration policy.**
- **Prejudice has become allowable**, so there's more division than ever before. We need policy that can address actual needs and realities, including the dangers of global pandemic, with an admission process that ensures immigrant rights, safe housing, and keeping families together. **ICE is still separating children from parents.** Because of our preoccupation with COVID, there's no public outcry.
- Violence, hunger, poverty, political realities, medical needs are things that **"push"**

people to migrate. The opportunity to work and support family members back home, the dream of a better life, **the hope for a better future "pull" people to migrate.**

Welcoming refugees is an act of love and hope. By helping to resettle the most vulnerable, we are living out our Christian faith as Jesus has challenged us to do.

[Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, auxiliary bishop of Washington and chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration]

- **Global warming and changing weather patterns** impact work and employment. They also impact disease, availability of food, and family and community unrest or violence.
- Most Americans are totally unaware of what's happening at migrant camps on the Mexican side of the border. **Very few resources (food, shelter, safety, healthcare) are provided by Mexico. The people there are really suffering.**



You're Reading a Salvatorian Family Publication



In response to our JLG call to focus on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), we produce this quarterly newsletter for members of our SDS Family.

We invite our members to **talk, pray, and act** on the issues we highlight. Use the links to learn more.

@ Prayer or @ UR Parish

Let us work to create a world where immigrants, migrants, and people on the move are treated with dignity, respect, welcome, and belonging.

How can I respond to the justice issues of immigration?

- Become aware of where you're getting your information from, as there are so many inaccurate sources.
- Listen to the voices of active advocates.
- Join the *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign of the USCCB (<https://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/>). Spend time learning and reflecting using materials on their website.
- Seek to understand the "why" of migration stories.
- Don't assume that immigration at our southern border is always Latinx. There are also immigrants from India, from Russia, and from other countries there.
- Help the Catholic Church in the US to continue to welcome the stranger and to provide advocacy and services by making a contribution to the National Catholic Fund for Migration and Refugee Services (<http://www.usccb.org/catholic-giving/opportunities-for-giving/migration-and-refugee-services/index.cfm>)
- Prayer, letter writing, petitions, supporting people doing direct action— all of these are ways to have an impact.
- Pair up with people in your parish to offer RCIA groups, young adult groups, and small faith communities an opportunity to use the study and discussion guides produced by USCCB (<https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples>)
- Invite your local community or your parish community to join the #MigrationMonday movement. Quotes and photos for your parish bulletin are available at <https://justiceforimmigrants.org/>



"It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more humane."
Pope Francis

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