**Transitioning to a New Administration:**

**How Can We Assist Immigrants and Refugees?**

Prepared by the Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Office, Priests of the Sacred Heart, U.S. Province

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The U.S. Bishops are committed to working with the new administration to ensure that refugees and immigrants are humanely welcomed to the United States without sacrificing our nation’s security. Our Catholic community stands with immigrant and refugees. We welcome them and offer them spiritual support and comfort during this period of uncertainty.

***What guidance can we provide to undocumented immigrants?***

At this time, we do not know what will occur when the new administration assumes office. In the interim, listed below is guidance you and members of your community can provide to undocumented immigrants to help put them in the best situation possible.

* Help them meet with an immigration legal services provider to get screened for forms of relief from removal. You can help them make an appointment to get screened by a recognized immigration legal service provider and ensure that their case is reviewed by an immigration attorney in good standing or an accredited representative.
* Help eligible persons apply for citizenship. According to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), over 8 million immigrants in United States are eligible for citizenship but have yet to apply (often because they are afraid). Catholic communities have launched assistance programs for lawful permanent residents who are eligible for citizenship. Some offer legal workshops with immigration attorneys, provide classes to prepare individuals for the citizenship examination, and raise funds to help pay their naturalization application fee when needed.
* Help them avoid immigration scams and notario fraud. Individuals need to be particularly vigilant about immigration scams at this time. You can share the following information and resources with undocumented individuals in your community:
  + Applications (through the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), the government entity that processes immigration applications in the United States. If individuals need general information about immigration benefits or current policies, they can “Ask Emma” at uscis.gov.
  + Legal Assistance: Individuals should be careful to obtain assistance from a qualified immigration attorney or legal services provider. Visit the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) website to locate a reputable organization near you.
  + Learn more about immigration scams and notario fraud by looking at the USCIS and the Executive Office for Immigration Review websites.
* Undocumented individuals should educate themselves on their rights when interacting with immigration officers. Detailed information on immigrants’ rights can be found in English at **www.adminrelief.org/resources/item.543575-Know\_Your\_Rights\_English** or in Spanish at **www.adminrelief.org/resources/item.543576-Know\_Your\_Rights\_Spanish**. Your parish could conduct a Know Your Rights workshop with the help of your local Catholic Charities/Catholic Social Services office or other immigrant advocate groups in your area.

***What guidance and support can we provide to refugees at this time?***

* We do not know how the new administration will revise the current refugee program. In the interim, it is important to tell refugees in your community to continue to work to integrate into your new community, by studying English, engaging with their communities, learning about the United States, and working to support themselves and their families.
* Report Hate Crimes. Not all communities have seen a recent increase in crime targeted at immigrants and refugees, however, we are deeply saddened to see that some in our country are engaging in acts of hate against foreigners. The Church does not condone such behavior. If a refugee in your community is threatened or assaulted, urge them to immediately call the police. Advise them to provide the responding officer with a detailed description of the incident. Victims should also report the offense to their local Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) office.
* Asking for Help: If you have questions or concerns in your community, contact the Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service at (202) 305-2935 or locate your local office at www.justice.gov/crs
* Host a solidarity event or interfaith prayer service. Our communities need to come together to welcome immigrants and refugees. Solidarity events are a great way to make immigrants and refugees in our communities feel supported. They are also an opportunity to further educate parishioners and community members on our government’s immigration- and refugee-related policies. [For help with hosting a bilingual Spanish-English solidarity event, contact the JPR Office at 414-427-4273.]
* Engage in dialogue about Catholic Social Teaching on migration. Start a dialogue with your community around Catholic Social Teaching on migration. Share a copy of and discuss the pastoral letter *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*.
* Pray together. Now, more than ever, immigrants and refugees in the United States and abroad need our prayers. You can dedicate a mass to immigrants in your community, plan a homily on migration, and distribute prayer cards. See our materials at **justiceforimmigrants.org.**
* Promote cultural awareness and foster a community of welcome by hosting a multicultural potluck night.
* Participate in Multicultural Celebrations of our Church. Learn about the Church’s immigrant history by attending mass on the Feast Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12th, the Feast Day of St. Frances Cabrini on November 13th, and the Feast Day of St. Kateri Tekakwitha on July 14th.
* Educate members of your community and ask them to take action on the Justice for Immigrants (JFI) website. Ask them to keep an eye out for action alerts posted on the JFI website – these are a quick and easy way for parishioners to make their voices heard!
* Engage in National Migration Week. Urge your community and parish to review our National Migration Week toolkit on the JFI website to learn about ways they can take action.

**Source: Justice for Immigrants Campaign, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops**