

Los Pequeños Pepper

Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo

June 2006

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A Los Pequeños Pepper
Special Topics Issue

"if YOU tremble with indignation at every injustice then you are a comrade of mine" CHE GUEVARA





Los Pequeños de Cristo

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Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo

June 2006

Volume 8, Number 6

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We are an Archdiocesan-wide Catholic lay organization committed to a charitable defense of the Catholic Faith by means of education, communication, and prayer. We are devoted to the Roman Catholic Magisterium, the Holy Father, and to the bishops and clergy in union with him. Our members believe what the Church believes and we promote what the Church teaches. To this end, we believe that no individual, whether cleric or lay person, has the right to alter the substance of the gospel message or moral truths which have been inerrantly and infallibly held by the Catholic Church since Her founding.

An Introduction to the Issue of Illegal Immigration

Regardless of varied political positions, there is a moral “bottom line” to which all Catholics must agree, as articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Concerning immigration, in the section on “Duties of Citizens” we read:

The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the *foreigner* in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws, and to assist in carrying civic burdens. [CCC, #2241]

Here is a two-fold mandate: the State must provide, in so far as it can, for the protection and natural rights of foreigners within its borders but retains the right and responsibility to regulate immigration and impose its laws on all people living in its territory.

Where *illegal* immigration is at issue, Catholics can (and will) disagree on how to balance humanitarian concerns against the common good of a sovereign nation – but they cannot disagree that both deserve consideration.

Conversely, positions on humanitarian aid to illegal immigrants or on illegal-immigration legislation may be flawed if either ignores the legitimate demands of the other.

This special issue of the *Pepper* has been prepared to explore some of the topical concerns of illegal immigration in the United States. 🌐



The blistered feet of an illegal immigrant



A group resting during an attempt to cross the desert and enter the United States

A Few Facts

Gleaned from the Center for Immigration Studies

Immigration Stats: During the 1990s, an average of more than 1.3 million immigrants — legal and illegal — settled in the United States each year. Between January 2000 and March 2002, 3.3 million additional immigrants had arrived. In less than 50 years, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that immigration will cause the population of the United States to increase from its present 288 million to more than 400 million. The foreign-born population of the United States is currently 33.1 million, equal to 11.5 percent of the U.S. population.

Illegal Immigration: The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) estimates that in January of 2000 there were 7 million illegal aliens living in the United States, a number that is growing by half a million a year. Thus, the illegal alien population in 2003 was at least 8 million.

Included in this estimate are approximately 78,000 illegal aliens from countries that are of special concern in the war on terror. It is important to note that the 500,000 annual increase is the net growth in the illegal-alien population (new illegal immigration minus deaths, legalizations, and out-migration). In 1999 for example, the INS estimates that 968,000 new illegal aliens settled in the U.S. This number was offset by 210,000 illegal aliens who either died or returned home on their own, 63,000 who were removed by the INS, and 183,000 illegal aliens who were given green cards as part of the normal “legal” immigration process.

One of the most important findings of the INS report is the intimate link between legal and illegal immigration. The INS estimates that it gave out 1.5 million green cards to illegal aliens in the 1990s. This was not due to amnesty legislation, but rather reflects how the legal immigration process embraces illegal immigration and encourages it through legal exemptions. According to the INS, only 412,000 illegal aliens were removed during the decade.

The Census Bureau has also developed estimates of its own. Their estimate at the time of the 2000 Census suggests that the illegal immigration population was about 8 million. Using this number, it can be concluded that the illegal-alien population grew by almost half a million a year in the 1990s. This conclusion is derived from a draft report given to the House Immigration Subcommittee by the INS that estimated the illegal population was 3.5 million in 1990. For the illegal population to have reached 8 million by 2000, the net increase had to be 400,000 to 500,000 per year during the 1990s.

The two “magnets” which attract illegal aliens are jobs and family connections. The typical Mexican worker earns one-tenth of what his American counterpart does, and numerous American businesses are willing to hire cheap, compliant labor from abroad; such businesses are seldom punished because our country lacks a viable system to verify new hires' work eligibility. In addition, communities of recently arrived legal immigrants help create immigration networks used by illegal aliens and serve as incubators for illegal immigration, providing jobs, housing, and entree to America for illegal-alien relatives and fellow countrymen.

Costs: Though illegal aliens make little use of welfare, from which they are generally barred, the costs of illegal immigration in terms of government expenditures for education, criminal justice, and emergency medical care are significant. California has estimated that the net cost to the state of providing government services to illegal immigrants approached \$3 billion during a single fiscal year. 🌐



Migrant worker

- Since 1977, INS has apprehended over a million illegals a year.
- By the early 1980s, the number of illegal aliens in the United States totaled 3 to 12 million.
- In 1980, the Census Bureau counted 14.6 million Hispanics in the United States, increasing to 15.8 million by 1982, and 17.3 million by 1985 — making America the 5th or 4th largest Spanish-speaking country in the world.
- According to the 1990 Census, Latin America accounted for 38 percent of America's foreign-born, well over half of whom were from Mexico. The real percentage is probably higher because illegal aliens avoid the census and most illegals are from Latin America.

Aztlan Rising

United States citizens are often baffled by the insistence that illegal immigrants are “not criminals,” despite the fact that their very presence in the country means breaking its laws. A distinction has been made between obviously anti-social behaviors, for which the term “criminal” draws little argument, and the hard-working, responsible efforts of many undocumented workers.

Far from seeing themselves as “criminals,” there’s an increasing sense of ownership among undocumented workers from Mexico. Many see their presence in the United States as simply taking back their own.

In the 1960s, Chicano political activists began to discuss the mythological region of Aztlan, ancestral homeland of the Aztecs, as a way to generate Chicano identity. Formerly the area of what is now Mexico City, today Aztlan includes California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and portions of Nevada, Utah, and Colorado, which its champions say were stolen by the United States and must be reclaimed for Mexico.

The idea has spread rapidly. *Five Hundred Years of Chicano History*, a book promoted by New Mexico’s *Southwest Organizing Project* and used in over 300 schools throughout the west, celebrates “resistance to being colonized and absorbed by racist empire builders.” It calls the INS and the Border Patrol “the Gestapo for Mexicans.” Therefore, many Chicanos do not consider themselves immigrants at all because their people “have been here for 450 years,” well before the Anglos. Nor do they accept the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American war in 1848 and redrew the borders between Mexico and the United States.

The majority of Aztlan activists believe reconquest can be accomplished peacefully. In the 80s, Mexico's leading daily newspaper expressed the thought:

The territory lost in the 19th century by...Mexico...seems to be restoring itself through a humble people who go on settling various zones that once were ours on the old maps. Land, under any concept of possession, ends up in the hands of those who deserve it.... [The result of this migration is to return the land] to the jurisdiction of Mexico without the firing of a single shot. [“The Great Invasion: Mexico Recovers Its Own,” *Excelsior*, 1982]

Fringe groups, of course, thrive on inflamed passions and there are plenty of those in the movement. In January 1995, El Plan de Aztlan Conference resolved: “We shall overcome...by the vote if possible and violence if necessary.” *Voz Fronteriza*, a Chicano student publication, referred to border patrol officers killed in the line of duty as “pigs (migra)” trying to defend “the false frontier.”🌐



The Plight of Undocumented Workers

He was an employer, himself an illegal immigrant from El Salvador, whose workplace was surrounded one morning by U.S. immigration authorities in a sweep to arrest undocumented workers. When they surrounded his place, barking orders and handcuffing fellow workers, he panicked and ran, hiding in a field of tall grass for five hours.

The raid was part of a campaign by the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security to better secure U.S. borders and reduce illegal immigration.

“I went through a lot just to come to this country. Human traffickers kidnapped me; they extorted money from my family; I couldn’t sleep or eat sometimes; and the worst of it all is that just when I started helping my parents, they arrest me like some kind of criminal and deport me back to my country in a way that was so humiliating,” another illegal immigrant said.

Human trafficking is a worldwide problem. In 1998, after a collision of two overcrowded ships carrying refugees illegally, Pope John Paul II deplored “the manner in which some people exploit the misery of so many poor people, for their own personal gain.” He called upon governments to find ways to stop the “dishonest traffic” of human smuggling. But where there is desperation, there will be someone trying to take advantage of the situation.

And there is desperation. According to U.S. Border Patrol statistics, 415 people died crossing the border illegally in 2005. David C. Iglesias, United States attorney for the district of New Mexico, writes:

Smuggling aliens across our borders is a dangerous business. All too often, people entrust their lives to smugglers, only to die in the broiling desert, or suffocate in the back of locked, airless trucks while the smugglers profit. As a Southwest Border federal prosecutor, I welcome the much-needed anti-smuggling tools the U.S. House of Representatives recently passed as part of immigration reform and can provide a frontline view of the tragedies that have evolved with this growing industry. [“Stop alien smuggling,” February 27, 2006]

Then there’s the issue of workplace exploitation. In 2003, Wal-Mart stores along the Mexican border were caught employing 345 illegal immigrants as after-hours janitors, some of whom worked seven days a week without overtime pay or health insurance, and were paid as little as \$2 a day.

Human Rights Watch has published a report, “Blood, Sweat, and Fear,” about the situation of undocumented workers in U.S. slaughterhouses who, working under dangerous conditions that include frequent injuries, including the loss of limbs, suffocation from poisonous gases, broken bones, beheadings and infections, have no compensation benefits. The report concludes, “All the abuses described in this report ...are directly linked to the vulnerable immigration status of most workers in the industry and the willingness of employers to take advantage of that vulnerability.”

The Center for Immigration Studies makes the observation that mixed signals coming from our country contribute to the victimization of workers. “Laws indicate that they are unwanted, but those laws are weak and poorly enforced, and employers often welcome these migrants for the cheap and compliant labor they provide in the home, business, industry and agriculture. As unfair as the conditions of employment may be, these jobs still serve as a magnet attracting others to this labor market...Employers often prefer the submissive and more cooperative comportment of aliens desperate for work and unlikely to question low wage levels.” 🌐



Cardinal Mahony and HR 4437

According to one newspaper account, an illegal from Guatemala, working as a painter in New Orleans, was caught in the chaos of Hurricane Katrina. Unlike his neighbors, his status meant that he couldn't obtain food stamps or seek jobs at the Social Security office. The Red Cross and Catholic Charities, however, provided food and medical care, no questions asked.

Is the U.S. government proposing to end these basic services to undocumented workers? According to Roger Mahony, Cardinal of the Los Angeles Catholic Archdiocese, yes. In response to a border-security bill (HR 4437) passed in late 2005 by the U.S. House of Representatives, he wrote to President Bush:

In effect, priests, ministers, rabbis, and others involved in various Church-related activities will be forced to become "quasi-immigration enforcement officials." The Catholic Church alone offers a vast spectrum of services for all in need, including education, health care, and social services. Our golden rule has always been to serve people in need--not to verify beforehand their immigration status.

But the Bill imposes incredible penalties upon any person assisting others through a Church or a social service organization. Up to five years in prison and seizure of assets would accompany serving the poor who later turn out to be here without proper legal documentation.

One could interpret this Bill to suggest that any spiritual and pastoral service given to any person requires proof of legal residence. Are we to stop every person coming to Holy Communion and first ask them to produce proof of legal residence before we can offer them the Body and Blood of Christ?

If Cardinal Mahony is correct that HR 4437 is targeting charitable relief efforts – never mind spiritual ministries - to undocumented workers, his public opposition to the legislation is entirely appropriate. But *does* HR 4437 outlaw acts of charity for illegal immigrants?

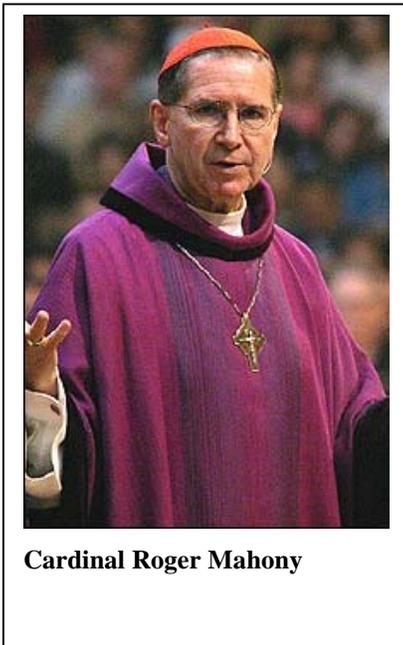
According to Rich Lowry, an editor for *National Review*, the Cardinal has misrepresented the situation. He writes:

In alleging that the House bill would criminalize the acts of good Samaritans, Cardinal Mahony is engaging in typical hardball political tactics — smearing his opponents in an attempt to give his side the better part of an argument.

The provision in question makes it illegal to "assist" an illegal immigrant to "remain in the United States." This merely tightens language already on the books. If the new language puts nuns at risk of prosecution for providing services to needy immigrants (it doesn't), they were already in such legal jeopardy. The bill stipulates that to break the law requires assisting an illegal knowingly or in reckless disregard of his status — because it is not aimed at social workers, but at the vicious "coyote" smuggling rings that exploit illegals in the course of bringing them here for exorbitant fees. ["What would Jesus do?" March 24, 2006]

....In the debate over the House bill, these employers are in a de facto alliance with Cardinal Mahony to try to preserve their access to cheap, low-skill labor without the full rights of U.S. citizens. Selfish capitalists

Mahony....continued on page 9



Cardinal Roger Mahony

Mahony...continued from p 8

surely have never been so grateful for the political activism of a socially conscious (and ill-informed) Catholic bishop.

House Republicans, in response to Cardinal Mahony's concerns, have said they would rewrite the bill's ambiguous section, which is aimed at the ruthless "coyotes" and "snake-heads" who smuggle people into the country. "Since the House bill's passage, many have misconstrued the House's good-faith effort to bring human traffickers to justice as a way to criminalize humanitarian assistance efforts," said one of HR 4437's sponsors. "The House bill does no such thing, nor did it intend to. We can assure you, just as under current law, religious organizations would not have to 'card' people at soup kitchens and homeless shelters.... Prosecutors would no sooner prosecute good Samaritans for 'assisting' illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S. under the House bill than they would prosecute such persons for 'encouraging' illegal immigrants to remain in the U.S. under current law." ☹



Is HR 4437 a Trojan Horse trying to destroy Catholic charity or does it provide legitimate border protection?

The Catholic Church and Immigration Reform

By Stephanie Block

The executive director of the *Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.*, Donald Kerwin, writes: "...the Catholic Church has played a central role in the immigrant-led protests that have swept the country. The church has encouraged parishioners to participate in the protests, offered bishops and priests as speakers, and served as an interlocutor for its newcomer members before Congress and in other public forums." ["Immigration Reform and the Catholic Church," May 1, 2006]

Kerwin isn't proposing a Catholic conspiracy. He has tremendous admiration for the immigration work of the Catholic Church. What he has identified is an impressive ideological network with its hub at the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops* (USCCB). In 2005, after years of pro-immigrant activism, the USCCB launched a national campaign, "Justice for Immigrants." In turn, nearly 80 U.S. dioceses initiated local "Justice for Immigrants" campaigns that were taken into diocesan parishes.

USCCB public policy on immigration doesn't support open borders, illegal immigration, or an amnesty package that would grant legal status to all unauthorized immigrants. However, it has created a complicated situation for itself, in which many of its allies *do* support these radical positions – and the Catholic Church is *very* generous to its allies.

Specifically, to further the work of its immigration campaign, the USCCB has devoted a significant portion of its annual *Catholic Campaign for Human Development* (CCHD) collection to projects that focus on "immigrant rights."

For instance, in the 2005-2006 funding period, CCHD awarded \$20,000 to **San Diego's Justice Overcoming Boundaries**. *Justice Overcoming Boundaries*, the **San Diego Catholic Diocese**, and the CCHD-funded *San Diego Organizing Project* were primary organizers of marches in San Diego, seeking laws that would offer undocumented immigrants legal standing in the U.S.

Somos Un Pueblo Unido, an immigrants' rights organization in **New Mexico** that received \$25,000 last year and \$30,000 this year from CCHD grants won a Santa Fe City Council resolution to ban city employees from asking immigrants about their immigration status. It spearheaded a statewide legislative campaign to make undocumented immigrants eligible for drivers' licenses and organized another to allow undocumented students access to in-state tuition and state financial aid. Its April 9, 2006 press release says that along with the CCHD-funded ACORN, *Call to Action's Pax Christi*, and the **Archdiocese of Santa Fe**, *Somos* was among the supporting organizations for New Mexico's immigration rights marches.

At least 29 CCHD grants were given to community organizations around the country, specifically to garner support for "immigrants' rights."

There is a second way immigration issues are carried into American Catholic parishes. CCHD has been funding "people's organizations" since the 1970s. About a dozen of these have formed national networks of community-based and religious affiliates, affecting hundreds of congregations in cities around the United States. All are highly political and connected to left-wing activism. The *Industrial Areas Foundation* (IAF), for instance, with about 55 affiliates and millions of Catholic dollars in its pockets, has been spreading liberation theology and its political opinions among Catholics for decades.

Here are some examples of IAF activism for immigration reform.

California: In Los Angeles, marches to support undocumented workers were organized by the coalition *Somos América* (We Are America) – of which ONE-LA/IAF, the Los Angeles branch of the *Industrial Areas Foundation*, is a part. With the **Archdiocese of Los Angeles** also a member of the coalition and ONE-LA/IAF organizing in dozens of Los Angeles parishes, the *Somos América* coalition is demanding that all illegal immigrants in the U.S. be naturalized.

In 2005, Wells Fargo Bank contributed \$25,000 to help ONE-LA/IAF “continue to have mobile *matriculas* events.” The bank accepts *matriculas consulares* as a form of identification, enabling illegal immigrants to obtain banking services. The cards also give access to city and state services and, in 13 states, to driver licenses.

Texas: The IAF’s work in the *colonias* – communities of illegal squatters that are frequently established without water or basic sanitation services – is legendary. Its efforts have created infrastructures that make the *colonias* livable. However, it has also imported Latin American liberationism into the Catholic churches around the *colonias*.

The IAF of Texas is responsible for the state’s “Robin Hood Laws,” which assured education funding to illegal immigrant communities was equal to that in other communities.

In Houston, Fr. Kevin Collins, a member of the executive committee of the city’s IAF local, was instrumental in obtaining a day labor center where undocumented workers and prospective employers can pair up. “It’s better for the neighborhood that workers are inside. It’s better for the workers,” said Broderick Bagert, an organizer for the *Metropolitan Organization*, the Houston IAF affiliate.

Maryland: In Baltimore, 500 members of BUILD (*Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development*, a Baltimore IAF local) gathered at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church to protest HR 4437, saying that the legislation “would make it a crime for others - including religious workers - to assist illegal immigrants.” [John-John Williams, “Immigration Bill Draws Criticism,” *Baltimore Sun*, March 20, 2006] Rhetoric was high, with members pledging, “that if they have to, they will go to jail.”

Arizona: *The Arizona Interfaith Network*, the collective name for the IAF’s statewide organization, urged U.S. House representatives (in a December 16, 2005 open letter) to vote against HR 4437. Its leadership organized an “Interfaith Prayer Service” at the state capitol in April 2006 in support of immigration rights.

Illinois: In Chicago, St. Gertrude’s Catholic Church parish bulletin announced that on Sunday, April 23, 2006 there would be an “Interfaith Vigil” at the Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel: “To pray and create a memorial for those who died on the border; To campaign for legalization and citizenship for the undocumented; To campaign for undocumented students to go to college and earn legal status; To campaign to keep families together.” St. Gertrude’s Catholic Church is a member of *United Power for Action and Justice* (UPAJ), Chicago’s IAF affiliate.

About four hundred people gathered to pray for immigration reform on April 10 at Our Lady of Tepeyac Catholic Church, another Chicago parish. It was timed to coincide with “A Day Without Immigrants,” when immigration reform protests and rallies were scheduled around the country. As with the above “Interfaith Vigil,” this vigil also prayed for “a path to legal residency and citizenship for undocumented workers, for a workable solution to unite families divided by the border, and a way for any student raised in the United States to earn legal residency and qualify for student aid.”

Furthermore, it utilized the standard liberationist technique of conscientizing and legitimating a political position by associating it with a cherished religious image: at the 12th station, where the worshipper is to meditate on the death of Jesus, the congregation prayed “for all those who have died trying to cross the border in search of a better life in the United States.” [Michelle Martin, “Immigration reform efforts, prayers continue,” *Catholic New World*, Archdiocesan paper of Chicago, April 16, 2006] Our Lady of Tepeyac Catholic Church is also a member of UPAJ. ☺



“Today we march;
tomorrow we vote”



In Santa Fe,
marchers head for
the Basilica of St.
Francis

Balancing Ideals

Welcoming the Stranger vs. Respecting Law [and Borders]

By Marie P. Loehr

Who IS my neighbor? -Luke 10:29
How can I give you up, O Ephraim, or hand you over, O Israel?
-Hosea 11:8-9

The Statue of Liberty holds her torch aloft in New York harbor. A bronze plaque, mounted on the base of her pedestal in 1903, preserves the poetry of Emma Lazarus written for this statue in 1883:

“ . . . Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shores. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Lady Liberty promises the light of freedom – and opportunity – to all who seek it and who are willing to work for it. Since she was assembled in New York harbor in 1886, she has symbolized the light of hope in the darkness of oppression and poverty, even from the very beginnings of this country’s experiment in freedom and rule of law, right up to the present day. The idea of light in darkness should resonate with Catholics, especially those who remember when the first chapter of the Gospel of John was read at the end of the Tridentine Mass:

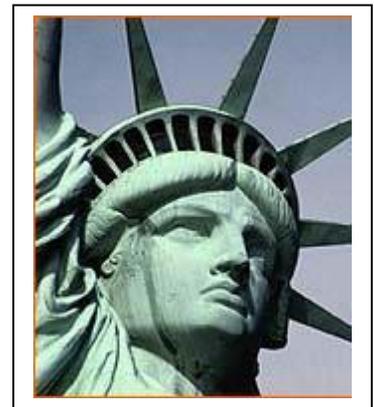
“In the beginning was the Word . . . In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness; and the darkness grasped it not.” [John 1:1-5] Christ reiterates later in John that he is the light of the world. He also says that those who abide in him will know the truth, and the truth shall make them free. In short, the Statue of Liberty and her promise echo Christ’s words and promise: light and freedom.

Yet we are confronted today with an ancient problem. How do we interpret Christ’s desire that we welcome the stranger, *i.e.*, feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead? These corporal works of mercy are the practical application of “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” It shows us how we are to love our neighbor as ourselves, which Christ describes as the second Great Commandment, after loving God with our entire breath and being.

This is radical on two counts. We must love ourselves with a proper evaluation of ourselves in truth and charity, vices and virtues. We must attempt to know ourselves in some degree as God knows us, in our own nothingness and emptiness as contingent, dependent, sinful persons. Yet we are also to love ourselves as he loves us in our infinite worth, unique gifts, and particular mission he calls us each to discover and pursue. THEN, we are to love our neighbor in the exact same way, trying to know him as God knows him, loving him as God loves him--with a sacrificial, self-emptying love. We are to love one another as Christ loves us and gives himself to us as Eucharist. [See *Deus caritas est*, #14. Cf. Benedict XVI in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, Ch. 5, “Eucharist and Mission,” pp. 90-122, especially 117-118.]

There can be no conflict between truth and love in Christ. Discovering justice and boundaries is a work of truth. Welcoming strangers is a work of love. And yet . . . in the words of the old joke, the Sisters of Charity have no mercy; the Sisters of Mercy have no charity. In the discussion of legal and illegal immigration, those who seek justice often put law over love; while those who seek mercy often put love over law.

There is a great deal written about specifics and particulars – law, civil and secular, as well as misery and privilege, as well as our rights taking precedence over immigrants’ rights, illegals most particularly. Much is written on application of the law and a nation’s right to self-defense, *i.e.*, to protect its borders, to control the flow of people over those borders. Some of this is legitimate concern. Some of it is a subtle selfish discrimination caused by fear, an insidious nativism, or outright xenophobia.



Thus, we must sometimes simply examine the basic Scriptural issues of “who is my neighbor?” regarding caritas and mercy, and “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” regarding veritas and justice.

As Americans, we are a restless people. We might well say with the Israelites, “my father was a wandering Aramaean.” We are always on the move. As Catholics, we are taught, especially since Vatican II, that we are a “pilgrim people.” The Family of Man, the Chosen People, the People of God are all wanderers through the desert of existence, the poverty of sin. Our forefathers in life and religion were nomadic peoples. All of us find ourselves in this country as a result of some forebear who sought escape from poverty or tyranny, or a forebear who was simply curious. Even the American Indian arrived here as a nomad, a pilgrim in search of a new life.

Christ himself had to flee to Egypt with Mary and Joseph to escape certain death at Herod’s hands. Passover, Exodus, and Resurrection should have particular meaning and force for those of us who have traveled the desert of Lent and the darkness of Passion Week, in order to rise with Christ from the slavery and poverty and tyranny of sin and death. This is the ultimate migration, and the standard or essential principle from whence all applications of both truth and love must develop.

In the words of Fr. Mark Gantley, JCL, in EWTN’s Catholic Q&A online, “The right to migrate is a human right given by God The social encyclicals of the popes have consistently taught the right of individuals to migrate to sustain one’s family . . . beginning with *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. These encyclicals emphasize that the goods of the earth belong to all people, and that people have a right to migrate when they have no opportunity to achieve a life of dignity in their own land.”

Christ knows all about “welcoming the stranger.” He was a stranger and welcomed into Mary’s womb. He was a stranger, and crucified by those who feared him. Even today he remains a stranger, not even welcomed in his own churches, his tabernacle relegated to small and hidden spaces, his presence tolerated only long enough to consecrate hosts for communion, but no more.

Because he was poor, he had nowhere to lay his head, he depended on the kindness of strangers, so to speak As we treat the least or littlest persons among us, so we treat him.

So, who is my neighbor? What does this mean in the context of so many people clamoring to enter this country, willing to risk their lives among those who would exploit them, enslave them, kill them?

Christ responds to this question with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritans themselves were despised aliens to their neighbors, the Jews. A priest and a Levite--equivalent to our professed religious--both passed a fellow Jew, a traveler robbed, beaten, and left for dead. They ignored him and pursued their own business. But a Samaritan came upon this man, took him to an inn, paid for all he would need in time, space and goods to be healed. In short, the despised Samaritan lived the corporal works of mercy in his actions to save this stranger--who would have died otherwise.

This is Christ’s definition of neighbor: both the man who needs welcome and assistance, as well as the man who offers it, strangers and aliens to one another as they are.

That is the essence of the problem of “welcoming the stranger.”

Life in Christ transcends all merely temporal ties of blood or tribe or nation. Eucharistic communion in Christ transcends all merely abstract morality of the social service sort. In Christ we are members of the same Body, bound by his body and blood nourishing ours. Even those who are not Catholic, Christian, or even American have a claim on our welcome, help and assistance, as a direct fruition of that Eucharistic communion and solidarity in Christ.

There has always been a strong nativist element in the American psyche. It is at odds with Christ’s injunction, and at odds with our own Declaration of Independence and Constitution. We have to be very cautious lest we judge immigration issues with the eyes and mind of Original Sin and its massive alienation from God and one another. Nevertheless, in this case, there are legitimate questions of justice: boundaries, services, and economic issues. How do we “render to Caesar” what is due Caesar, a.k.a. the legally constituted government? How do we discern that which is proper to its rule of law, and its obligation to protect its borders, in light of what Christ demands?

In other words, what does it mean to protect and defend our borders from illegal incursions?

We do live by the rule of law. We are all subject to the Constitution, its amendments, and the legitimate laws and precedents established by our legislators and judges. All power and authority come from God himself. The government has a legitimate obligation to protect our borders and boundaries from criminals, from terrorists, from invading armies bent on conquest. Do illegal



The Good Samaritan

immigrants fit that description? We know there will always be criminals among those who enter this country, legally or illegally. We know, because current events have brutally taught us, that terrorists will cross our borders, legally or illegally, in order to destroy us as a country. We know that there are those who would invade us to subjugate us and annihilate our freedoms, if they could. We do need to guard against such proven dangers.

We have an obligation in truth and justice to examine the law to discover whether it is legitimate, whether it supports human freedom and dignity. Laws supporting abortion do not. That's clear-cut. Laws supporting abortion simply permit murder of the littlest and least stranger among us.

Immigration, illegal or not, does not present itself with such clarity. Instead, we are presented with the old moral dilemma much loved by sophomore classes in moral theology and ethics, during the 50s and 60s of the last century.

To wit, a man builds a nuclear bomb shelter under his house to protect his family and himself in case of nuclear attack. There is enough room for the members of the family. He fills it with supplies for that specific number of people for an indeterminate length of time, dictated by scientific estimates about the distance from ground zero, fallout, wind, radiation, isotope half-life, and so on. When the warning of impending attack comes, he and his family head for the shelter.

But his neighbors, less prescient or prudent, know the shelter is there. They want to be included in that protection to the point of condemning ALL to death--by bomb or starvation or neighbor-to-neighbor violence. What is his moral obligation in this case? Keep them out, and save his supplies for his family at all cost? Or save as many as possible for the short term, with all the mayhem that selection process may entail? The textbook answer was always that he had the right to self-defense, to the point of killing his neighbors, to protect his family and himself from harm.

In defense of this verdict, there are those who might cite the example of the wise and foolish virgins--and the foolish virgins' just comeuppance. Or the man who had no wedding garment, and was tossed out into the outer darkness where there was the wailing and gnashing of teeth . . . And yet, we are all strangers, all aliens in one way or another, all in need of mercy and aid. We all will desire mercy at the end, and make a claim to enter heaven. Christ says [Matthew 11: 11-13] that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away. We may take that to mean the violence of mortification, suffering, sacrifice, and struggle to plod the strait and narrow way who IS Christ. In one sense we are ALL legal or illegal immigrants enduring whatever we must to enter the kingdom of God, whatever the cost.

In the final analysis, God's desire for mercy, his law of "love thy neighbor as thyself" takes precedence over all other law. We work within the secular framework of law whenever and wherever possible. At the same time there are occasions when civil disobedience is not only permissible, but required. Even at the cost of offending family and friends, even at the cost of imprisonment, even at the cost of death in certain cases. In spite of the cost, non-violence in the pursuit of God's truth and love is a priority. The anti-abortion movement has lived this.

Christ says there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend. He laid down his life for all of us -- strangers due to sin, friends by adoption -- via his suffering and sacrifice.

The position we take and work for regarding immigration, both legal and illegal, will depend on our understanding of Christ's injunction to love neighbor as self, to welcome the stranger, to live the works of mercy. It will also consider the need of our neighbor in the context of our political ideals, as embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It will also be qualified by our knowledge of how just or unjust immigration laws may be, and how to rectify that.

Finally, that position must be considered in light of the maxim of John of the Cross: "We will be judged on love."🌐

For further reference, see:

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, especially Article 7, the Seventh Commandment, "Thou Shalt Not Steal," #2420-2463.
- *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter Abbott, S.J., ed., Guild Press: New York, 1966. "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," pp. 298-308.
- *The Medieval Machine: The Industrial Revolution of the Middle Ages*, Jean Gimpel. Barnes and Noble Books: New York, 2003. "Preface," especially p. viii. NB the reality of Christendom in the Middle Ages with its free flow of commerce, trade, goods--and people. Cf. the idea of the current European Union in its ideal purpose and practical function.

Cf. also the movement of peoples in the Old Testament, as both nomads and conquered or enslaved, and the movement of the Apostles and the missionary Church post-Pentecost in the New Testament--and after.

At the Immigration Rally

Having an open heart doesn't mean supporting open borders.

By Peggy Noonan

*To love
immigrants
is not to
believe
America has
no right to
decide who
can come to
America
and become
a citizen.*

I love immigrants. That's not important or relevant, but it's where I start. I love them so much I often have the impulse to kiss their hands. I am not kidding. I love them because they are brave. They left their country and struggled their way to this one to get a better life. (It's good to remember that that's not an insult to us but a compliment. They're saying: Your way is better.) I love immigrants because they make themselves lonely for their children. They go to a place where few share their language, their memories, their references. They do this so their children will have a greater chance at happiness. I love immigrants because they invest in the future with the biggest thing they can invest with: their life. Immigrants often start out in hard jobs for low wages, and of course are not applauded for this but sort of looked through, not noticed. I love immigrants because I am close enough to the immigrant experience to, simply, identify with them.

My grandparents had Irish accents, spoke Gaelic at home, came from poor, obscure farming areas, and understood themselves to be different from those who'd been in America for many years. To be an immigrant in America is to experience a low-key, sometimes barely conscious estrangement from the main. It passes in a generation or two, and America is worth the price in any case, but estrangement deserves sympathy.

I love immigrants from all places, of all colors, ages and backgrounds. But my feelings are particularly strong toward Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants, and when I think of why, two things come to mind. One is that most of them are Catholic, which for me means that for all our differences in language and experience I share with them the biggest essential. They love Our Lady of Guadalupe and so do I. They know Jesus. You don't get more basic than one's deepest beliefs, one's understanding of the truest facts of life. So Mexican immigrants are more like me than some of my neighbors are, and in my heart I don't see them as immigrants but cousins. (I am aware it is a faux pas to admit this. In the modern world we're not supposed to like our own. Sorry.)

The second thing is just a memory. It was a few nights after 9/11 and in New York, still rocked and shocked by what had happened, we had taken to massing spontaneously on the West Side Highway to cheer the trucks carrying workers who were going downtown to dig us out of the rubble. We stood there--all the orthodontists and attorneys and editors of Manhattan, the kings and queens of the city, suddenly irrelevant--cheering members of the Iron Workers Local and sanitation workers and cops and medical technicians.

One night, about 11 p.m., I was walking home with friends, going north on the wide, dark highway, and we came upon a woman, a thick middle-aged woman, dark skinned and dark haired. She was with a baby in a stroller. She was, I think, not the mother but the grandmother. They were there alone, in the darkness. Affixed to the stroller was a hand-lettered sign, and on the sign were these words: "American You Are Not Alone--Mexico Is With You." All alone and she came out with that sign, at that time. I have tried to tell that story in speeches and I can never make my way through it, and as I write my eyes fill with tears. Is this sentimental? Well, nations run on many things, including sentiment.

This week I went to the immigration march in New York. We massed on the Brooklyn Bridge and then marched into lower Manhattan. I just wanted to be there and see who was marching and hear what they said. There were many thousands of people--it was dense, packed, a long moving line of people. It took an hour and a half to get across the bridge because every 20 yards or so the organizers would stop, play drums, and chant chants for local and national TV cameras. They'd stop, enact joy and fervor, and then walk on. Everyone was cheerful and peaceful.

Most of the marchers were young, in their teens and 20s and 30s. I asked a young man who'd rolled a newspaper into a bullhorn what he was saying when he led the crowd in chants. He didn't speak enough English to answer quickly. Then he said, "We are saying, 'We are here, look at us.'" I thanked him and patted his arm. I said, "God bless you," and he

nodded and marched on. Then he broke his stride, turned his head and said, "God bless you, too."

I walked along with a young black woman, an American in her mid-20s, who was chatting in English and Spanish with those nearby. She was clearly in some organizational position, and she was carrying an American flag. Someone said something to her about it. She was on her cell phone, but after she snapped it shut, she laughed and said, "I am having an affair with this flag. I am having a love affair with this flag. Don't tell my husband." Everyone laughed, including me. But it was clear all the American flags were a strategic decision. All those Mexican flags in the marches in L.A. and elsewhere 10 days ago had been a public relations disaster. So now it was all American flags.

There were signs saying "We are here" and "We are America" and "A nation of immigrants." It was obvious that this was all well organized: people in orange plastic pullovers directing the human traffic and chants, lots of hand-lettered union signs. Cars on the bridge below the walkway sounded their horns in rhythm with the chants in a manner that seemed coordinated. At one point a young Hispanic woman called out, "The Irish are coming!" It was like a scene from a movie where someone says, "Here come the Fighting 69th!" We looked for the Irish on the drive below, but there was no sign of them. My people, hardy and tardy.

The overwhelming impression I had was that the marchers were peaceful and high-spirited. Some seemed resentful or mildly snarly, but they were in the minority--and young, emphasis on young. We curled past the courthouses of downtown, up Broadway, to Chinatown. Chinatown is of course largely populated by immigrants, legal and illegal, but they were not in the march. In fact, I did not see a single Asian in the march. They were all working, in the shops and on the street. They had no intention of letting yet another New York march get in the way of business. And you know, the marchers seemed to sense it. They didn't spend long in Chinatown. As far as I could see they didn't make it to Little Italy, either.

Where does all this leave me? Does my feeling for immigrants, and my afternoon at the march, leave me supporting open borders, or illegal immigration? No. Why should it? To love immigrants is not to believe America has no right to decide who can come to America and become a citizen. America has always decided who comes here. That's why it all worked.

While the marchers seemed to be good people, and were very likable, the march itself, I think, violated the old immigrant politesse--the general understanding that you're not supposed to get here and immediately start making demands. It would never have occurred to my grandparents to demand respect. They thought they had to earn it. It would never have occurred to them to air mass grievances, assert rights, issue a list of legislative demands. Especially if they were here unlawfully.

I happen to think America in general has deep affection for immigrants, knows they are part of the dynamic, a part of our growth and our endless coming-into-being. But when your heart is soft, and America's is, your head must be hard. We are a sovereign nation operating under the rule of law. That, in fact, is why many immigrants come here. They come from places where the law, such as it is, is corrupt, malleable, limiting. Does it make sense to subvert our own laws to facilitate the entrance of those in pursuit of government by law? Whatever our sentiments and sympathies as individuals, America has the right, and the responsibility, to protect the integrity of its borders, to make the laws by which immigrants are granted entrance, and to enforce those laws.

I think open-borders proponents are, simply, wrong. I think those who call good people like members of the voluntary border patrols "yahoos" are snobs. I think those whose primary concern is preserving the Hispanic vote for the Democratic Party, or not losing the Hispanic vote for the Republican Party, are being cynical, selfish, and stupid, too. It's not all about who gets what vote, it's about continuing a system of laws that has allowed America to become, among many other things, a place immigrants want to come to. And it's about admitting immigrants in a coherent, orderly, legal manner, with an eye first to what America needs. That's how you continue a good thing, which is what we've had. That's how you leave Americans who've been here for a while grateful for immigration, and immigrants, and loving them, and even wanting, sometimes, to kiss their hands. ☺

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June Calendar

Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting June 23, 2006:

Call (505) 293-8006 for
information.

Pro-life Prayer:

Planned Parenthood Abortuary
701 San Mateo Blvd.
Catholic Knights Chapel: (505)
266-4100

12 noon, Thursday

Mass at the Catholic Knights Chapel

Fr. Stephen Imbarrato

*For more information, call
(505) 266-4100*



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