



# MINNESOTA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

Archdiocese of St. Paul/Minneapolis ♦ Diocese of Crookston ♦ Diocese of Duluth  
Diocese of New Ulm ♦ Diocese of St. Cloud ♦ Diocese of Winona

## **Statement of the Roman Catholic Bishops of Minnesota on Comprehensive Immigration Reform June 6, 2007**

We, the Roman Catholic Bishops of the state of Minnesota, call upon Minnesota's Congressional leaders to enact comprehensive immigration reform that is humane, just, and workable. At the heart of Catholic social teaching is the belief that all human beings are created in God's image and likeness - are children of God - and therefore possess sacred dignity and rights.

Comprehensive reform of United States' immigration policies is an urgent matter. Many immigrants to our country suffer exploitation and abuse, and some even die in their struggle to find work and reunite with their families. In Minnesota, we have recently witnessed suffering such as separation of families due to the enforcement of current immigration law. Our current policies do not allow enough people to enter legally to meet employment demands, nor do they provide reasonable and timely procedure for immigrants seeking legal residency, citizenship, or family reunification.

While we recognize that countries have a right to maintain secure borders, we don't believe this goal can be achieved apart from comprehensive immigration reform.

We support a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would include the following principles from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops:

- ♦ recognize immigrant family stability and reunification as priorities;
- ♦ insist that worker programs contain protection for U.S. and migrant workers;
- ♦ allow for an earned legalization program, one that is realistic and fair, for undocumented persons already in this country;
- ♦ restore due process protections for immigrants; and
- ♦ address the economic, political, and social root causes of migration.

We share the concerns that were recently voiced by the Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski, Bishop of Orlando, Florida in his testimony before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law about the "compromise" bill that has been debated in the U.S. Senate. As it stands now, this bill would fail to provide temporary workers a path to permanent residency, thus creating an underclass of workers doomed to work in short-term, low-paid jobs with none of the benefits of citizenship. Of particular concern is this regrettable policy shift: family unity would no longer be the priority and cornerstone of the immigration system; instead, preference would be given to certain "merits," such as education level, and in many cases this would create long delays for family reunification.

We will continue to uphold the human dignity and rights of immigrants. We will continue to encourage our dioceses, parishes and organizations to advocate comprehensive reform. Remembering that most of our ancestors were immigrants to this nation, we call upon the citizens of Minnesota to open their hearts to our newest neighbors, to those who have come here seeking employment, security, and reunification with their family

members. We urge all Minnesotans to engage in the process of comprehensive immigration reform by contacting your U.S. Senators and Representatives to voice your concerns. We look forward to working with lawmakers and immigration officials to welcome the stranger in the years to come.

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