



In 2003, the United States Conference of Bishops produced a pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, in which they outline the elements that any immigration reform should incorporate. These points include:

**Enforcement:** The U.S. Catholic Bishops accept the legitimate role of the U.S. government in intercepting unauthorized migrants who attempt to travel to the United States. The Bishops also believe that by increasing lawful means for migrants to enter, live, and work in the United States, law enforcement will be better able to focus upon those who truly threaten public safety: drug and human traffickers, smugglers, and would-be terrorists. Any enforcement measures must be targeted, proportional, and humane.

**Earned Legalization:** An earned legalization program would allow foreign nationals of good moral character who are living in the United States to apply to adjust their status to obtain lawful permanent residence. Such a program would create an eventual path to citizenship, requiring applicants to complete and pass background checks, pay a fine, and establish eligibility for resident status to participate in the program. Such a program would help stabilize the workforce, promote family unity, and bring a large population "out of the shadows," as members of their communities.

**Future Worker Program:** A worker program to permit foreign-born workers to enter the country safely and legally would help reduce illegal immigration and the loss of life in the American desert. Any program should include workplace protections, living wage levels, safeguards against the displacement of U.S. workers, and family unity.

**Family-based Immigration Reform:** It currently takes years for family members to be reunited through the family-based legal immigration system. This leads to family breakdown and, in some cases, illegal immigration. Changes in family-based immigration should be made to increase the number of family visas available and reduce family reunification waiting times.

**Restoration of Due Process Rights:** Due process rights taken away by the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) should be restored. For example, the three and ten year bars to reentry should be eliminated.

**Addressing Root Causes:** Congress should examine the root causes of migration, such as underdevelopment and poverty in sending countries, and seek long-term solutions. The antidote to the problem of illegal immigration is sustainable economic development in sending countries. In an ideal world, migration should be driven by choice, not necessity.

Catholics in good conscience can disagree on the appropriate level of immigration to allow and how to best reform our broken system. There is no dogma on immigration policy. Careful reasoning, respect for human dignity, persuasion, and prudence are all necessary tools.

Immigration, like health care, is a complex issue. Resolving big questions like this through the democratic process isn't easy and requires patience.