

We, the Conference of Benedictine Prioresses, join our voices with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), with Network, and with the bipartisan legislative effort to create a comprehensive immigration reform.

Context

As immigrants themselves, our Benedictine foremothers understood the needs of immigrants coming to this country. They served well and nurtured faith in this new land. In our time of numerous migrations, we acknowledge the rich contribution made by immigrant people and decry the unjust treatment they are too often compelled to endure.

Rooted in the wellsprings of Christian Scriptures, we recall the migrations of our forebearers - Sara and Abraham, who left their homeland (Genesis 12:1-3) as well as Moses, who led the people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:7-10), and we hear the clear gospel call to welcome the stranger into our midst (Mt. 25:35).

As Benedictine monastic women, we *listen with the ear of our hearts* (Prologue of the Rule of Benedict) as we call for compassion and justice for all immigrant people. We are animated by our Rule which bids us to welcome, as Christ, all guests who present themselves (Rule of Benedict 53:1). Hospitality is a core value of Benedictine spirituality as well as a sacred duty and trust. Because we know that it is God whom we receive in the "other", we dare to speak out, even in this age of violence and fear of the stranger. We are compelled to raise our voices in an effort to transform the culture of fear and exclusion into one of peace and inclusion where the "stranger" becomes friend.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

The central features of any immigration reform need to be:

- a clear and secure path to legal documentation and citizenship for the estimated 11 million immigrants who are currently in the United States ,
- a family-based reunification system that keeps families together.
- a revision of the current visa system especially for migrant workers.
- protection for all workers' rights,
- a speedy enactment of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act with an option for community service in lieu of military service.
- reform of the detention and deportation system with due process.
- a fair and expedient process for asylum seekers.

As people of faith and citizens of the United States of America , we urge our country to establish compassionate and just policies to offer newcomers opportunities to participate fully in our society, to satisfy their basic human needs, to share their many gifts with us, and to live according to their human dignity.

Tucson, Arizona
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