

**A STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM  
BY THE  
CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF LOUISIANA**

We, the Catholic Bishops of Louisiana, wish to address the issue of immigration reform in light of certain bills that have been proposed in the Louisiana Legislature's 2008 Regular Session.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's desire."

The Catholic Church has a rich history of involvement in the immigration issue. This has taken the form of both assisting with assimilation of many immigrants and refugees as well as advocacy. This experience, backed by the true belief that all individuals possess inherent human dignity and worth, compels us to speak out on the issue of immigration reform. This is indeed a moral issue which directly affects and impacts the rights, well being, and life of human beings. The alien has always been a protected figure, as the Old Testament proclaims: "So, you, too, must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves" (Deut. 10:17-19). Jesus speaks of the migrant as one who is on the margins of society and instructs those who come in contact with the migrant to remember his words: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35).

The Church recognizes the responsibility of a government to develop policies and procedures to protect its citizenship from dangerous persons and to regulate the flow of immigration. The Catholic Church supports an earned path to citizenship as an integral part of comprehensive immigration reform. We do not support legislation that takes the form of enforcement-only policies which neither uphold the dignity of each individual nor address the inadequacies of our immigration policies. We need to be realistic about our need for workers and the need to have adequate protection of their safety and rights.

We urge Governor Jindal and the Louisiana Legislature to reject any immigration legislation that is enforcement-only. We are convinced that this issue can best be resolved on the federal level. Hence, we ask both the governor and the legislature to encourage the federal government to address the need for comprehensive immigration reform. Comprehensive immigration reform includes: (1) an earned legalization program; (2) a worker program that protects foreign-born workers and safeguards against the displacement of U.S. workers; (3) family-based reform that reduces waiting times for family reunification and bears in mind the devastating effects of separation on a family; (4) restoration of due process protections for immigrants; and (5) policies that address the root causes of migration. We oppose any attempts at state legislation that focus on enforcement-only policies. True immigration reform should ensure that the dignity and inherent rights of each individual are upheld, and that the common good is achieved.