



Implementing a *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign in the Parish



The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform



JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS *a journey of hope*

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To achieve justice for immigrants in this country and to bring about the kinds of reforms in our nation's immigration laws that will restore dignity to newcomers, it will be important to better inform the public about immigrants and the problems inherent in current immigration laws. The parishes are an important place for this educational process and the grassroots advocacy that will be essential in bringing about change.

The following suggestions are intended to help parishes organize and pursue educational and advocacy activities that can result in more welcoming attitudes toward immigrants and achieve humane reforms in our nation's immigration laws and policies.

PART I: INITIAL ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS

1. The pastor/administrator should meet with the pastoral staff and/or other parish leaders to review the goals of the Campaign and its theological underpinnings then commit themselves to implementing the Campaign in the parish.
2. All involved should be encouraged to become familiar with the bishops' pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. This can be found at www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml.
3. The parish leadership should familiarize themselves with the goals and scope of the national *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign and the resources available to assist their efforts. See www.justiceforimmigrants.org/learn_about_justice.html.
4. Make contact with the (arch)diocesan coordinator for the *Justice for Immigrants* campaign to learn what information and resources are available and to explore ways that the (arch)diocese can be of assistance.

(If your (arch)diocese does not have a *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign coordinator, you may contact the national Campaign at LAnchondo@usccb.org to learn more about resources available to assist your efforts and/or to learn who in the (arch)diocese may be of assistance.)
5. Parishioners should be informed at Mass and through other communications about the parish's commitment to the Campaign and be encouraged to participate actively. The importance of lay participation in the Campaign should be stressed.
6. Identify and reach out to the various organizations within the parish that can be collaborators in the *Justice for Immigrants* campaign. (See listing of prospective organizations under Part III below.)
7. Convene organizing meeting of all interested parishioners and organizations. Suggested agenda for such a meeting includes:
 - a. Articulate rationale for Church and parish leadership commitment to the Campaign.
 - b. Reach common understanding of Campaign's scope and objectives.
 - c. Determine how and to what extent the parish will become involved in the Campaign.
 - d. Take stock of participants' (and the parish organizations they represent) capacity and resources in relation to Campaign's objectives (i.e., educational, advocacy, and legal services capacity).
 - e. Assess extent of participants' commitment and identify how the effort will be organized.
 - f. Organize necessary committees tasked with responsibilities for various functional areas, such as educational efforts targeting parishioners and others in the community, media relations, parish outreach, grassroots development and mobilization, advocacy, immigration services, etc.
 - g. Determine leadership for the various committees and determine how they will be coordinated.
 - h. Begin to identify division of labor, responsibilities, and leadership among the participants.
 - i. Identify other organizations/individuals who should be invited to participate in the Campaign.
 - j. Determine communications plan (within parish and externally).
 - k. Identify "point of contact" to interface and coordinate with (arch)diocesan Campaign.

6. Determine next steps.
 - † Inform the (arch)diocesan *Justice for Immigrants* coordinator about your parish's commitment and plans.
 - † Announce parish involvement in Campaign to all parishioners and invite their participation.
 - † Determine schedule for various committee activities and meetings.
 - † Arrange training program for all parishioners involved on the various committees so that each member is familiar with the Campaign's objectives and available resources.

PART II: SUGGESTED PARISH COMMITTEES AND TASKS

What follows is a partial list of the functions that are likely to be required of the parish Justice for Immigrants Campaign and a suggested way of organizing and engaging in them.

1: PARISHIONER EDUCATION

The goal of the educational activities within the parish is to promote a conversion of minds and hearts in order to bring about (1) Gospel attitudes toward immigrants, (2) a recognition that changes in public policies are needed, and (3) that parishioners have a responsibility to act upon their faith and values to promote positive change. The following suggestions for educational activities within the parish should serve to inspire creative ideas.

- † Become familiar with the various educational materials available on the national website at www.justiceforimmigrants.org. The website feature, Learn the Issues, provides several useful materials designed to inform and educate about the issues.
- † Develop Homily themes and content. (See resource material entitled, *Suggestions for Homilists*.)
- † Find opportunities throughout the year to relate Christian values to concern for immigrants, especially when the liturgical readings focus on migrants and "welcoming the stranger" (the Holy Family as refugees, the Good Samaritan, Mathew's Gospel, the Exodus accounts, the Beatitudes, etc.) and distribute the *Justice for Immigrants* brochures and prayer cards at Masses and parish gatherings.
- † Incorporate *Justice for Immigrants* education in existing parish educational fora. (For example, bulletin inserts, Letters from the Pastor, Religious Education programs, prayer groups, study groups, etc.)
- † Convene special events to use as teaching opportunities and to highlight parish's involvement in Campaign.
- † Create opportunities for interaction with immigrant communities to learn their realities.
- † Invite experts to address parishioners on the issues. (Here, the (arch)diocese may be of help.)
- † Include quotes from *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* in your bulletin and use your "Pastor's Corner" article to focus on the statement's message. (See resource titled, *Quotes from Catholic Teaching on Migration*.)
- † Share this teaching from the pulpit, in your classrooms, and in community meetings; talk about the Church's rich heritage of welcome and ministry to migrants and how we are called as Christians to challenge the anti-immigrant sentiment so prevalent today. (See *Suggestions for Homilists*.)
- † Invite local Church experts (e.g., from the (arch)diocese, you might consider the *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign coordinator or the staff of Catholic Charities, ethnic ministries, social ministry, or immigrant legal services) to lead a panel discussion on the rights and dignity of migrants and refugees. (See resource, *A Guide to Understanding Catholic Social Teaching on Immigration*.)
- † Focus an in-service day or faculty meeting for parish school teachers and/or catechists on the Campaign and how its teachings can be woven into school and religious education activities.
- † Seek out "immersion" activities that will expose community members to people whose lives differ from theirs; for example, engage in community service in a neighborhood that is culturally diverse or economically disadvantaged relative to others.
- † Create opportunities for immigrants, migrants, and refugees to share their stories in parishes, schools, and community meetings.
- † Model "inter-Church" cooperation by proactively reaching out to other organizations that work with immigrants, migrants, and refugees.
- † Promote National Migration Week in your parish, traditionally observed in January. (See *Resource Bibliography* to obtain information and to obtain National Migration Week materials.)
- † Include special prayers in the General Intercessions at Mass that focus on the dignity of immigrants. (See resource titled, *Liturgy and Prayer Suggestions*.)
- † Use parish newsletters and bulletins to publicize pertinent information sent from immigrant advocacy organizations.
- † Foster "volunteerism"; encourage people in your parish and community to host a newly arrived immigrant family, organize community drives, and tutor immigrant children.



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2: MEDIA AND PUBLIC OUTREACH

As parishioners become better informed about the need for comprehensive reforms in our laws and policies toward immigrants, and as they become committed to advocating for such changes, an important parish activity will be to influence the attitudes of the broader public. The media, both Catholic and secular, will be a particularly important tool.

The suggestions that follow offer ideas for organizing and implementing the parish's outreach to the media.

- † Interface/coordinate with the (arch)diocesan Campaign coordinator and/or the (arch)diocesan communications office in developing and pursuing a media strategy.
- † Identify local media outlets and contacts that should be targeted for outreach.

(To access a useful resource to identify media — local, regional, and national — please visit [HTTP://capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/dbq/media](http://capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/dbq/media).)
- † Develop messages, conduct/arrange training on media outreach and interviewing skills, and identify spokespersons from the parish.
- † Contact media to create opportunities to promote Campaign's goals. Arranging meetings with media editorial boards is a good way to begin.
- † Become familiar with media contact feature of *Justice for Immigrants'* website. (See link above.)
- † Keep local media apprised of any relevant *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign developments and human-interest stories that shed positive light on the immigrant community.
- † Develop rapport with reporters in which you are seen as a preferred source and contact. (Please refer to the resource material titled, **Media Outreach Tips**, for further helpful ideas.)

Beyond the outreach involving media, parishioners should pursue opportunities to make presentations and engage in discussions with others in the community to promote the Campaign's goals. Such activities might include

- † Create a *Justice for Immigrants* speaker's bureau from among parishioners, (arch)diocesan staff, and immigrants who can be available to attend speaking engagements. (See resource titled, *Starting a Justice for Immigrants Speaker's Bureau*.)
- † Drawing on the support of (arch)diocesan staff and other experts, train speakers on campaign objectives and principles.
- † Arrange speaking engagements at local fora, including city government meetings, civic organizations' meetings, neighborhood group meetings, etc.

3. PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

Once parishioners are well informed of the Campaign's public policy objectives and are conversant in the issues involved, they need to organize and mobilize to influence their elected representatives and senators. The goal is to create a political environment in which the comprehensive reforms promoted in the *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign can be achieved legislatively. This will require active and vocal participation of parishioners and other advocates.

Some ideas for organizing and pursuing legislative advocacy include:

- † Request assistance in developing an advocacy strategy from the (arch)diocesan *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign coordinator or other available experts.
- † Familiarize parishioners with the Campaign's advocacy agenda, objectives, and messages.
- † Determine the parish's advocacy strategy, including messages, messengers, and audiences.
- † Identify other advocacy groups in the community and develop strategies for joining forces.
- † Reach out to immigrant communities to coordinate advocacy efforts and/or to mobilize them on behalf of the parish's advocacy efforts.
- † Coordinate letter-writing campaigns. An important tool for this effort can be found on the national *Justice for Immigrants* Campaign website at www.justiceforimmigrants.org/action.html.
- † Arrange visits by parishioners to the offices of their elected representatives.

Note: In addition to the (arch)diocese, the State Catholic Conference in your state may serve as a good resource in your advocacy efforts.

PART III: PARTIAL LISTING OF ORGANIZATIONS TO CONSIDER INCLUDING IN THE PARISH *JUSTICE FOR IMMIGRANTS* CAMPAIGN

- † Knights of Columbus
- † Catholic Daughters
- † Parish Council of Catholic Women
- † St. Vincent de Paul Society
- † Religious Communities of Sisters and Priests
- † Justice and Peace Councils
- † Social Action Committee
- † Catholic Campaign for Human Development-funded groups