



Pastoral Responses to Immigration Reform

Here are suggestions of how you and your parish can engage in pastoral and political action around immigration reform. You will find three tiers, reflecting different levels and types of engagement.

For Clergy

First Tier Next Steps (Easy: High Impact)

1. **Prayers of the Faithful.** Include in your prayers of the faithful, an intercession inviting us to remember the undocumented, legislators, and Catholic consciences in our prayers.¹
2. **Homilies.** Make it a point to mention aspects of the readings that touch on and can relate to the issue of immigration, the undocumented, how we treat the least among us.²
3. Encourage parishioners to be further **formed in Catholic Social Teaching around the issue of Immigration**, including availing themselves of the excellent materials at www.justiceforimmigrants.org.
4. Invite someone to **share an immigration story, or a personal experience as an undocumented resident** in your parish, after communion.

Second Tier Next Steps (Medium: Wider impact)

1. Make an **invitation after mass**, and make a **table** available, to call folks to commit to prayer/fasting for Immigration Reform (see resource list on extranet).
2. Form a team or invite a parish social ministry coordinator to form a team to hold a **'house meeting(s)'** at the parish or in a home, in which you share immigration stories, discuss Catholic Social Teaching, and invite others to become leaders in the movement for immigration reform.
3. **Gather signatures** of people who would like to actively engage in this issue and be advocates for those who are undocumented and for a just and compassionate reform... [give form]
4. **Write a letter to your local paper** in support of just and compassionate immigration reform and invite others to join you.³

Third Tier Next Steps (Challenge: Lasting impact)

1. Consider making an appointment for a **legislative visit** to your congressional representative with a delegation from your parish.
2. Hold a **Mass and/or Procession** or other public liturgy/event for Immigration Reform, coordinating with others in your area.

¹ See resource on Prayers of the Faithful for Immigration on Priests Extranet and rcbo.org/respect-life, where all the resources mentioned are gathered. For additional prayer and liturgy ideas, please see the following: <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/documents/liturg-prayer-suggestions.pdf>

² Here is a sample/model: <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/documents/sample-homily-cardina-mccarrick.pdf>

³ For a good model of opinion writing, see: <http://www.newsobserver.com/2013/03/28/2786526/immigration-laws-need-reform.html#storylink=cpy>

Suggestions for Parish Communities:

With many in our community frightened to leave their homes for work/school and everyday errands for fear of deportation & profiling, there are ways we can be a bridge to their temporal needs as they are impacted...

- Pastors Discretion-Parishes can take up a collection/fundraiser to help families in need in during this crisis with rent, food, general assistance, etc.
- Parishes can reach out to their local food pantry or [St. Vincent de Paul Society](#) chapter to help coordinate food and supply drop offs for at risk families unable to collect these items.
- Encourage supporting local vendors/businesses that are immigrant owned/employed (i.e. fruit stands, newer sellers, food trucks, etc.)
- Parishes can develop communication network (i.e. platforms such as Signal App or text) so at risk/homebound parishioners can post needs and community can help address (i.e. picking up medication, financial needs, groceries, Eucharistic Ministers to the Homebound etc.) If you have a trade to offer, (i.e. cutting hair) you could offer to do in home services.
- Parishes can help create economic stability with families unable to work at this time with financial donations or offering a micro-fair-trade type "marketplace" to sell food or crafted items, produce, etc. without families having to leave their homes so profits go directly back to the family (a volunteer sells after the masses on their behalf, etc.). Be sure to follow parish safeguards and policies for collections and sales to ensure monies are handled correctly and, as always, guard against fraud.
- **Parish Organizing**
 - Organize an Immigration Listening session with parishioners from the entire community. Follow and encourage aspiring citizens to become part of advocacy actions. Listen to the stories of immigrants in your community and, as they are willing, empower the undocumented to tell their

stories to enlighten others to immigrant realities.

- Connect with Catholic Charities to sponsor and organize Legal Clinic Sessions in your parish.
 - Hold Immigration Fee Drives to raise funds for an individual's immigration filing fees.
 - Call or send postcards to your U.S. Senators and representatives asking that they pass just and compassionate immigration reform legislation.
 - Accompany individuals to ICE Check– Ins.
 - Help immigrant children with school enrollment.
 - Provide transportation for individuals to Immigration Court.
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- Check [Wholehearted Trauma Resources](#) from Catholic Health USA (CCUSA) so that parishes can: demonstrate sensitivity to the impact of painful experiences on its members and their loved ones.
 - Check out our two parishes in our Diocese with Catholic Mental Health Ministries: Holy Rosary in Antioch and St. Columba Church in Oakland.

For support with any of these suggestions or to have a workshop on compassionate listening and trauma-informed faithful community care, please contact Kiona Medina, coordinator of respect life and social justice at kmedina@oakdiocese.org.