

Statement and Resolution Chicago Province Corporate Stance on Immigration

Whereas the 2009 USC Provincial Assembly & Chapter resolved that “the Chicago Province support the position of the US Catholic Conference of Bishops calling for comprehensive immigration reform and collaborate with others working for such reform”;

Whereas the 2012 General Chapter Interpretative Summary notes that “the cultural-religious divide” marginalizes “various cultural, religious, national, ethnic, political, migrant communities” and calls us to embrace “migrant communities” as our dialogue partners;

Whereas the US Bishops issued their pastoral letter *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope* in which they articulated five principles that govern how the Church responds to public policy proposal relating to immigration:

BE IT RESOLVED that, for the coming three years, the Chicago Province take a corporate stance on Immigration using the same five principles that are articulated in *Strangers No Longer* (US and Mexican Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter, 2003):

- **Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.**
- **Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.**
- **Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.**
- **Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.**
- **The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.**

RATIONALE

Since coming to North America, SVDs have been committed to working with immigrants, from the German-speaking community that lived around Techny to the present Hispanic/Vietnamese etc. ministries in our parishes today. We stand with the USCCB in their comment that: “Every person is precious and people are more important than things. The measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.” (*Life and Dignity of the Human Person: Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* and *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*).

During this time when anti-immigrant sentiments, misinformation and hatred are finding a way into laws, policies and ways of dealings with immigrants, we Divine Word Missionaries of the Chicago Province believe it is especially urgent that we stand with immigrants and with those who share our passion for justice for immigrants.

In January, 2003, the bishops of the United States and Mexico issued the joint pastoral letter, ***Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope***. In that document, the U.S. bishops articulated five principles that govern how the Church responds to public policy proposals relating to immigration. We Divine Word Missionaries of the Chicago Province will intentionally work toward the realization of these five principles; therefore, we commit ourselves to pray for immigrants, to become aware of immigrants’ situations, educate ourselves and others on immigration issues, develop relationships that are built on respect, advocate, act and serve with and for immigrants in the following ways:

PRAYER

- Prayer Services/ Holy Hours for immigration
- Petitions during our Liturgy
- Personal prayer time for immigrants and those in detention, and the intentions of immigrants.
- Pray for our ministries with immigrants: parishes, Priests for Justice, Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, SVD/SSpS/SSpSAP Joint Venture, 8th Day Center for Justice, etc.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

- The plight of immigrants
- Learning how our faith approaches immigration
- Knowing the laws (local, state/provincial and national)
- How immigration is linked with social justice and the Gospels
- Key issues of immigration throughout the Chicago Province
- Knowing the rights of immigrants in your area
- Learn about the current immigration issues and realities that immigrants face
- Listening to the stories of immigrants
- Personal contact with immigrants and their families
- Seeing movies with an immigration theme
- Reading materials on the subject of immigration
- Talks and presentations
- Language Learning

RELATIONSHIPS FOR TRANSFORMATION -- Change of Attitudes

- Respect and kindness
- Overcoming the “other” mentality of hatred and indifference
- Awareness of language we use (ex. undocumented person instead of illegal)
- Welcoming attitude
- Identify with immigrants
- Create assessable space for immigrations (e.g. translation)
- Emphasizing moral law over civil law

ADVOCACY

- Concrete lobbying, letter writing, e-mailing and networking for policy change that will support and impact immigrants
- Raise immigrants’ awareness of their rights and dignity as humans
- Participate in a public rally, town hall meeting, etc. when possible
- Network with others on immigration
- Attend Ecumenical Advocacy Days

ACTION

- Host and/or plan with neighboring parishes to have an evening on “Christians and Immigration Today”
- Be mindful of how we speak about immigrants
- Participate in the prayer vigil at Broadview Detention Center on some Fridays or other local opportunities
- Be a part of Priests for Justice, Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, Chicago New Sanctuary Movement, and/or ICIRR (Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights) or other regional/local groups.
- Become an Immigrant Welcoming Congregation within the realities of our Province
- Service to the immigrant community – Education, Hotline, other service projects, etc.
- Continue our work with the SVD/SSpS/SSpSAP Joint Venture and the 8th Day Center for Justice.
- Set up a contact person in each community.
- Become a member of a pastoral care team for detainees and/or assist with accompaniment efforts.

The JPIC Coordinator, along with the JPIC Committee, will coordinate these efforts and regularly communicate with the Province over the points outlined in this resolution.