

Discerning How To Welcome Your Neighbor

Each of us wants to be part of a welcoming community, but we often find ourselves at a loss as to where to start. We know the Lord calls on us, but how? What if I don't have the space or the means to provide shelter? What if there are no immigrants in my community? What if those around me are reluctant to learn about immigration?

Addressing these questions requires careful discernment. Instead of listing what you don't have, turn inward and allow God to illuminate your community's strengths. Take a moment to reflect on the Prayer of Saint Ignatius and consider the questions below.

Who is your community?

Tailor your actions to the needs of your community, not the other way around. Take into consideration your congregation, your neighbors and your locality. Who might need help? Who needs to hear the stories of their neighbors? Who is already engaged? Who might be uncomfortable? Are there organizations with which you can partner?

What does your community need?

Are you prepared to ask people directly what they need? Your goal should not be to speak for others or make assumptions, but instead to create a platform and start a dialogue.

What can you offer?

Think about the resources your community already has, but be mindful of your limitations. Resources aren't limited to money or time. You may have more than you realize.

Remember: All efforts, regardless of size, are beneficial and essential when advocating for social justice. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; in all your ways be mindful of Him, and He will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Prayer of Saint Ignatius

Dear God,

Teach me to be generous
To love and serve you as you deserve
To give and not to count the cost
To fight and not to heed the wounds
To toil and not to seek for rest
To labor and to look for no reward
Except that of knowing that
I do your Holy Will.

Amen

Get More Resources

To learn more about how to help immigrants in your community and find free resources about taking action, visit cliniclegal.org/welcome.



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What can I do?

Once you have discerned who your community is, what they need, and what you're able to offer, consider the action options below. Many of these actions require collaboration. Find a list of CLINIC affiliates at cliniclegal.org/directory.

An important note about safety: Be mindful about not putting immigrants at risk while trying to help. Do not publicly advertise that groups of undocumented immigrants will be at an event or publicly expose the identity of an undocumented person. Exercise extreme caution at all times.

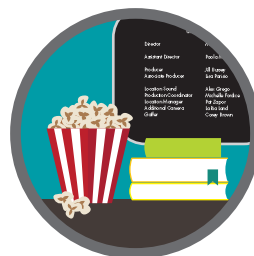
Although offering sanctuary may be most likely to carry consequences, be aware that many of these options may have consequences. An important part of your discernment process may be reflecting on risks and seeking legal counsel as necessary.

For more information and resources, visit cliniclegal.org/welcome.



Support immigrant-owned businesses

Identify and support immigrant-owned businesses locally and beyond. Use immigrant-owned restaurants to cater events.



Increase fellowship

Host a prayer/discussion group, book club, movie night, or other event to create a dialogue on immigration and refugee issues.

Resources: cliniclegal.org/cst/parish



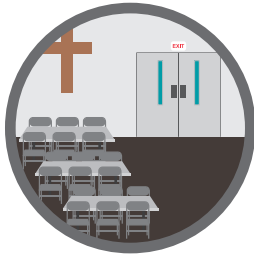
Form partnerships

Collaborate on a project with other local groups. Host a potluck to discuss issues affecting immigrants and refugees. Organize a food/supplies/resources drive to support an immigrant family in need or a church that is providing sanctuary. Furnish the apartment of a newly arrived refugee family. Some of these activities may constitute harboring, seek legal counsel as necessary.



Make a plan

Help immigrants at risk of detention or deportation connect with local legal service providers (find one at cliniclegal.org/directory). Create a referral list of local legal services and consulates. Have it translated.



Offer free space for community education events

Host a workshop or class for people in the area. Examples: Know Your Rights trainings, immigration screenings, family emergency planning for parents who are at risk of deportation, English as a Second Language classes, citizenship test preparation classes.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/resources/know-your-rights



Provide financial support

Fundraise to cover the costs of legal filing fees, to provide micro-loans, or otherwise support vulnerable immigrant and refugee families.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/feeincreases



Speak out

Support immigrants and refugees via social media or write an op-ed or letter to the editor to a local newspaper or magazine. Please be sure to carefully review the note about safety before doing media work.



Engage your leaders

Write a letter to your church leadership, local bishop or state bishops' conference, religious community leadership or the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supporting their legislative efforts around immigration. Let your conference know how important these issues are!



Advocate for pro-immigrant policies

Hold a phone bank, rally, or respond to a specific piece of legislation affecting immigrants or refugees in your locality, state, or on the federal level.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/state-and-local



Walk with your neighbor

Accompany immigrants to their Immigration and Customs Enforcement or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services appointments.



Offer someone a ride

Provide rides for immigrants who are afraid to drive for fear they may be stopped by police. This activity may have consequences, seek legal counsel as necessary.



Offer sanctuary

Although this is a powerful action and statement, it may carry serious consequences, including fines, criminal prosecution, jail time, etc. Anyone considering this option should consult with an attorney first. You might be agreeing to house, clothe, and feed a person (or family) for an indefinite amount of time. Make sure you have the resources.

Looking for ways to engage your parish on immigration issues?



- 1 Consider hosting a discussion group. Available resources include:
 - Just Matters immigration module (8 week series): justfaith.org/programs/justmatters-modules/
 - Justice for Immigrants campaign resources for parishes: www.justiceforimmigrants.org/parishes.shtml

- 2 Show a film and hold a discussion. Visit cliniclegal.org/cst/parish for suggestions.

- 3 Host activities for parishioners of different cultural backgrounds to get to know one another.

- 4 Encourage immigrants in your community to gather important documents and save money so that they will be prepared to apply when future programs become available. Visit cliniclegal.org/resources/envelope for more information on CLINIC's envelope to promote document preparation.

- 5 Join us in praying with and for immigrants and refugees. Visit cliniclegal.org/cst for resources on Catholic Social Teaching and migration, including CLINIC's prayer card.

- 6 Partner with an immigration service provider:
 - Host a presentation to keep immigrants in your community informed about current programs and services
 - Volunteer to support a naturalization workshop

Locate a CLINIC affiliate near you at cliniclegal.org/affiliates/directory.

- 7 Stay up to date on proposed legislation that would affect immigrants in your community and ask your students to advocate for laws that honor the dignity of immigrants.

- Sign up to receive action alerts through the Justice for Immigrants campaign at: capwiz.com/justiceforimmigrants/mlm/signup
- Visit cliniclegal.org/programs/advocacy/state-and-local for information on common issues CLINIC sees arising in state and local legislation and resources on how to address them



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Why Your Parish Should Care About Immigration



"Migrants are our brothers and sisters in search of a better life, far away from poverty, hunger, exploitation and the unjust distribution of the planet's resources which are meant to be equitably shared by all. Don't we all want a better, more decent and prosperous life to share with our loved ones?"

Pope Francis

Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Jan. 17, 2016

- 1** The Catholic Church is rooted in a history of migration. We are an immigrant church that embraces our call to "welcome the stranger" among us. We are encouraged by biblical teachings that remind us every human being is made in God's image and that our treatment of our neighbor is a reflection of God in us.
- 2** Existing immigration laws and policies undermine families and communities instead of keeping families together. More than 5 million children in the United States are in mixed-status families, where the children are U.S. citizens living with at least one undocumented parent. Record deportations over the past six years (more than 2 million) have torn families apart, with parents being deported away from their U.S.-citizen children.
- 3** There are global inequities and root causes that force the separation of families, such as extreme poverty and violence. Every person has an equal right to receive from the earth what is necessary for life—food, clothing and shelter.
- 4** The United States continues to detain immigrant families—mothers with children—who are fleeing violence in Central America. These families pose no threat to anyone and detaining them is inhumane and costly to taxpayers. Viable alternatives to detention exist, including community-based case management services that ensure families meet their legal obligations and also receive the help they need.
- 5** As people of faith, we know that each person matters and is sacred. Immigration reform will improve the lives of nearly 12 million people who are already here, supporting families and building communities.



Catholic Principles of Migration

Our approach to migration is rooted in the Gospel and in the rich tradition of Catholic social teaching. A recent example of this teaching is in [*Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*](#), a pastoral letter concerning migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States.

I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

II. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.

The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

III. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories and their borders. However, wealthier nations, which have the ability to better protect and feed their residents, have a strong obligation to

accommodate migration flows.

IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.

V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment by enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.



Alternative to Detention Programs

Why Use Alternatives to Detention?

The immigration detention system, initially created to ensure immigrants appear for their court proceedings, is broken, costly, and inhumane. Currently, immigrant detention costs taxpayers \$2 billion/year with a \$166/day/individual cost for adult detainees. With the addition of family detention, which costs \$240-280/day per family member, the cost to operate the immigrant detention system has escalated. Moreover, the current detention system locks up vulnerable migrants who should not be detained and primarily relies on for-profit private prison corporations to imprison roughly 440,000 individuals a year. Alternatives to detention (ATDs) programs enable individuals to live in the community, not in prison-like settings, while complying with U.S. immigration law.

Government May Use Discretion Not to Detain

For many immigrants in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, detention is not legally required. ICE has the discretion to decide whether a person should be detained, released, or placed into an ATD program. In response to claims that it was not adequately using its discretion, ICE developed and deployed a risk assessment tool to help make informed detention decisions based on an individual's circumstances. However, the risk assessment tool's guidance can be overridden to ensure that ICE meets its detention bed occupancy requirement of 34,000 beds per day, which is currently required by appropriations language. Additionally, ICE can enroll individuals in its own ATD program, ISAP II (Intensive Supervision Assistance Program), which is a program that utilizes electronic ankle monitors, biometric voice recognition software, unannounced home visits, employer verification, and in-person reporting to supervise participants. ISAP II offers only basic case management services and is incompatible with service methods for the humane treatment of vulnerable populations such as mothers with children or survivors of trauma.

Past ATD Programs Have Worked

The following are examples of effective community-based ATD programs that have demonstrated a high percentage of compliance with immigration proceedings and lower costs than the current government model:

- From 1999 – 2002, Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) collaborated with Catholic Charities of New Orleans to work with 39 asylum seekers released from detention and 64 indefinite detainees who could not be removed from the United States. The court appearance rate for participants was 97% and the program cost \$1,430 per year per client.¹
- From 1997-2000, the Vera Institute of Justice's Appearance Assistance Project implemented a supervised release and assistance program. The program served over 500 participants in three detained groups: asylum seekers, persons convicted of crimes facing removal, and undocumented immigrants. The program saved taxpayers \$4,000 per participant and boasted a 91% appearance rate at required hearings, including a 93% appearance rate for asylum seekers.²
- In 1999 the INS partnered with Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) to assist 25 Chinese asylum seekers released from detention. INS released the asylum seekers into open shelters around the country, where they received housing, food, medical care, and continuous case management. Participants had a 96% appearance rate.³
- In 2013, DHS signed separate Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) with LIRS and the Catholic network (the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) in partnership with United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)) to pilot ATD programs providing care for asylum seekers and vulnerable groups released from detention. LIRS's program was originally operating Newark/New York, Chicago, and San Antonio. The Catholic program originally operated in Baton Rouge and Boston. The Catholic program served approximately 45 individuals during its service term.

What Are Case Management-Based Community Support Forms of Alternative to Detention?

Alternatives to detention programs that utilize unique case management-based community support models provide legal and social services as well as community support to vulnerable individuals such as asylum seekers, torture victims, pregnant women, families with young children, primary caregivers, elderly, and victims of crime who would otherwise be detained. This type of program offers unique data collection, case management experience, and customized case-by-case evaluation methodology implemented by expert staff to ensure humane treatment and compliance with immigration legal requirements. These types of programs strive to provide participants with high rates of compliance and appearance for initial court proceedings, greater access to due process, and improved wellbeing and integration into the community.

Links between Family Detention and Case Management

Since July 2014, when the government began utilizing large-scale detention facilities to detain immigrant women and children, child welfare and immigration experts have been advocating for community-based case management ATDs as a meaningful alternative to family detention facilities. In March 2015, the Department of Homeland Security issued a request for proposals for what it described as a Family Case Management Proposal (FCMP). The FCMP was proposed as a pilot for a new community-based alternative to detention initiatives specifically designed to enroll immigrant families. The pilot program will enroll family units residing or intending to reside in Baltimore/Washington D.C., Miami, Los Angeles, New York City/Newark and Chicago.

In September 2015, the entire FCMP was awarded to GEO Cares, part of a for-profit entity, GEO Corporation, which oversees 25% of the entire immigrant detention system in the country. GEO Cares has limited legal and social service case management experience. A national company, they have few on the ground relationships with local immigration social and legal service providers.

Conclusion

CLINIC maintains that immigrant women and children should not be detained in large scale detention facilities but instead should be released to family members in community settings. CLINIC believes that families can be better served in these settings and will also be more likely to comply with their immigration proceedings if they are given adequate information and opportunity. CLINIC will continue to work to advocate for meaningful alternatives to detention and adequate post-release screening and access to legal services for families released for detention.

End notes

- ¹ A More Human System: Community-Based Alternatives to Immigration Detention (Part 2), Sue Weishar, Just South Quarterly.
- ² The Appearance Assistance Program, Attaining Compliance with Immigration Laws Through Community Supervision, Vera Institute of Justice, 1998, www.vera.org/download?file+211/aap.pdf.
- ³ Unlocking Liberty: A Way Forward for U.S. Immigration Detention Policy, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, October 27, 2011, available at www.lirs.org/dignity.