

## **Standing at the Crossroads**

### **The urgent call for humane and comprehensive change.**

*by Allison Johnson, Angela Maria Kelley, Sally Steenland, Gabriel Salguero, Bob Ekblad, Daniel G. Groody, and José F. Morales Jr., with first-person stories from Sandra Hernandez, Cheuang Kavan, and Marilyn Anderson*

### **Building a Civilization of Love: Catholic social teaching and immigration reform.**

by Daniel G. Groody

At the heart of the Catholic Church's social teaching is a vision of God who migrated to the human race to save a people alienated from God. In response to the God who first loved us, it sees itself as a pilgrim people and the body of Christ who journey through this world as spiritual migrants. As it moves toward a promised homeland, it seeks to walk in solidarity with all those who are vulnerable in their earthly sojourn, working together for the unity of the human family and a more just and peaceful world.

Today the church finds itself not only at geographical borders, but at the borders between civil law and natural law, human rights and sovereign rights, national security and human insecurity, and citizenship and discipleship. In the faces of more than 200 million people on the move globally today, however, it sees a mirror of itself and the image of Christ, urging it to advocate for three important dimensions of immigration reform: 1) the dignity of the human person; 2) the international common good; and 3) a globalization of solidarity.

Despite the physical difficulties of their journey, many migrants say that the hardest parts are the indignities they experience when people treat them as dogs, as if they were the lowest form of life on earth. Often their worst fear is that they are no one to anyone.

Catholic social teaching shows us that immigration reform must begin with an understanding of what it means to be made in God's image and likeness. In contrast to a world that often typecasts immigrants as aliens and invaders, if not terrorists or criminals, Catholic social teaching seeks to look first at the human face of the migrant. It is the cornerstone of a just and humane society to see that they are not merely workers but people (Genesis 1:26), not simply strangers but members of God's household, not just foreigners but children of God (Ephesians 2:19).

Catholic social teaching acknowledges that a state has a right and even a duty to protect its borders, but it does not see this as an unrestricted or absolute right. People also have a right to migrate, especially when conditions in their homeland make it impossible to live dignified lives. Thus, Catholic social teaching challenges nationalistic, legalistic, or materialistic idolatries that exclude others without any social, moral, or divine reference point, or any regard for the exigencies of distributive, contributive, and restorative justice. The Catholic bishops of the United States believe that "any limitation on international migration must be undertaken only after careful consideration of the demands of international solidarity. These considerations include development, trade and investment programs, education and training, and even distribution policies designed to narrow the wide gaps between the rich and the poor." As such, migration must not be viewed as a problem in itself but a symptom of deeper global imbalances that need attention.

"Migration," as Pope Benedict XVI notes, "is an opportunity to emphasize the unity of the human family and the values of acceptance, hospitality, and love of neighbor." He adds, "in an increasingly globalized society, the common good and the effort to obtain it [involve] the whole human family... [and] the community of peoples and nations." In proclaiming the kingdom of God, we seek to promote the dignity of all people in order to achieve a globalization of solidarity that builds, in the end, a civilization of love.

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