

**USCMA Resolution On Behalf of the Stranger  
A Mission Response to Immigration Reform  
2005 Annual Meeting  
Tucson, Arizona**

*The stranger who sojourns with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love [the stranger] as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”  
Leviticus 19:33-34*

**Let it be resolved that:**

USCMA members, recognizing that root causes of migration lie in economic, trade and environmental inequities, realize that we have a moral responsibility to call on all peoples of faith to advocate for more just immigration policies and compassionate responses to immigrants and their families.

**Rationale:**

A record high of more than 34 million foreign-born persons reside in the United States. Just in the past 20 years, about 23 million newcomers have arrived. At the same time, US immigration laws and policies have become increasingly restrictive and even harmful to some immigrants and asylum seekers. Between 8 and 10 million people in the U.S. live on the margins of our society for lack of proper immigration documentation.

Since the beginning of modern Catholic Social Teaching with Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and continuing through Pope John Paul II’s encyclicals, especially *Laborem Excercens* (1981) and *Centisimus Annus* (1991), there is a strongly defined right to work. The right to labor is a core element of our Tradition and a necessary condition if we are to attain the Common Good.

Experiences of the people of Mexico and countries further south show that current aid and trade policies lack basic respect for immigrants that profoundly and negatively impact workers, their families and the environments in migrants’ homelands.

The current militarized border enforcement plan is a failed policy. Since 1998 more than 2000 migrants – men, women and children have lost their lives in the deserts of the US–Mexico borderlands trying to make their way to the U.S. The border blockade strategy has militarized the border, which drives migrants into remote desert regions yet has failed to stem the flow of immigrants into the U.S. In addition, the fragile desert environment has sustained severe damage as migrants move through these remote areas.

**Call for Specific Actions:**

USCMA requests its members to:

1. Support the efforts of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops who are calling for broad reforms of US immigration laws and policy, *The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform*.
2. Work among our congregations and communities of faith to educate ourselves and others on Catholic Social Teaching on migration, including the historic joint pastoral letter by the

bishops of the U.S. and Mexico in 2003, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*.

3. Urge the US Government to enforce current border policies fairly, humanely and with a conscious effort to protect the people and the land.
4. Demand that workers and their families currently living in the U.S. have access to a program of legalization that offers equity-building paths to permanent residency and eventual citizenship.
5. Advocate for international agreements that are negotiated in ways that build mutual and just relationships. International workers' rights must be recognized and honored in ways that protect: the basic right to organize and bargain collectively, individual workers' religious freedoms, job portability, easy and safe travel between the U.S. and homelands, achievable and verifiable paths to residency, and a basic human right of mobility.
6. Learn more about the "Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act of 2005" (S. 1033, HR 2330) introduced by Senators McCain and Kennedy and Representatives Kolbe, Flake and Gutierrez.

Adapted from materials from "No More Deaths – No Mas Muertes," faith-based principles for immigration reform and other sources and *Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope*, The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform.