

Sixth Sunday of Easter

This week I attended the immigration conference sponsored by our diocese. I heard some very fine talks about pastoral care and legal hurdles. We all hear frequently that the immigration system in the United States is broken and needs reform. People have to wait many years to obtain citizenship legally, and this causes the breakup of families, the loss of jobs, and costly expenses.

An immigration reform bill is underway in Congress, and although it has many good points, we still don't know how good it will be when it passes from the Senate to the House. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has a platform for immigration reform, based on principles such as secure borders and family unity. The bishops also wish to address the underlying causes of migration. Let me read you a quote from our bishops' office of migration and refugee services:

“Beyond the immediate goal of securing passage for comprehensive immigration reform, the bishops affirm that the most effective, long-term solution to prevent unauthorized immigration is to address the root causes that prompt migration. The United States must work in solidarity with the international community to help raise the standard of living, uphold human rights, and implement complementary political institutions in the underdeveloped world so that people have the chance to prosper in their homelands, rather than having to migrate to find opportunities elsewhere. This will allow people to remain in their native lands and support their families with dignity. As the bishops have noted time and again, migration should ultimately be driven by choice and not necessity.” Our concerns, then, are not just about procedures in our own country, but about fairness around the world.

We sang this refrain today with Psalm 67: **“O God, let all the nations praise you.”** This psalm could be a theme song for addressing the causes of global migration. It asks God to show pity on us by helping people of other nations. It prays that all nations will acknowledge God's saving work, and that God will guide the nations on the earth by ruling over the peoples in fairness. **“May the nations be glad and exult because you rule the peoples in equity; the nations on the earth you guide.”** Not all nations enjoy equity. Some people are born into cultures where food and drink are hard to obtain, where jobs are scarce, and crime is high. Others are born where families are strong, prosperity abounds, and people have opportunity for economic growth.

Ultimately, having more fairness among the nations will help solve our problems at home. It will keep each nation strong, limit the desire to take what others possess, and diminish international violence. We can help ourselves at home when we help the needy who are far away. We have opportunities to be just and fair in our own neighborhoods. When we are, we can be sure it is the work of God, and all the nations will come to praise him.