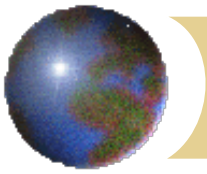


*One Family Under God:
A Theological Perspective on Immigration for
Christian Social Workers*

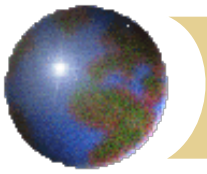
Sr. Stephanie Spandl, SSND, MAT, MSW, LICSW
NACSW Audio Conference Workshop
September 30, 2013



Context of Immigration: U.S. Identity as a Nation of Immigrants

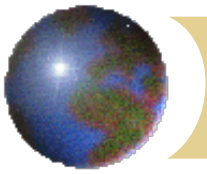
Emma Lazarus': A New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, with conquering limbs astride from land to land; here at our sea-washed sunset gates shall stand a mighty woman with a torch, whose flame is the imprisoned lightning, and her name **Mother of Exiles**. From her beacon-hand glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command the air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame. "Keep ancient lands your storied pomp!" cries she with silent lips. "**Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the retched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, the tempest-tost to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door!**"



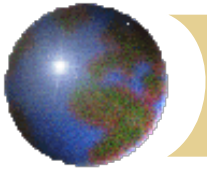
Context of Immigration

- ✚ 13% of U.S. population foreign born - 20% immigrants and their children.
- ✚ International realities: war, poverty, U.S. policies, economic globalization
- ✚ U.S. realities: Recession, aging population and decreased tax base, need for both skilled and unskilled workers



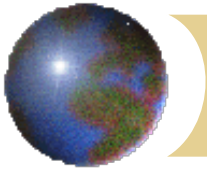
Context of Immigration

- ✚ Hostility in the National environment
 - ✚ Arizona SB 1070 ... Georgia & Alabama
 - ✚ Racial profiling -Local police as enforcement arm of ICE
 - ✚ Detained immigrants jailed with other criminals – “prison industry”
- ✚ The creation of “welcoming communities”
 - ✚ Driver’s license for undocumented
 - ✚ In-state tuition for undocumented
- ✚ The Dream Act and Comprehensive Immigration Reform
- ✚ Strengthening Refugee Resettlement Act.



Context of Immigration

- ✚ Types of immigrants: immigrants (documented and undocumented), refugees, asylees
- ✚ Many immigrants come from trauma of war, persecution, and/or deep poverty (Current tendency to reject validity of economic migration)
- ✚ Challenges of resettlement: culture shock, separation from family/social support, poverty, language barriers, racism.
- ✚ High % of refugees suffer mental health issues but greatly underutilize services.



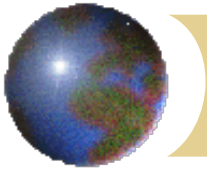
Theological Reflection

✚ Members of the Body of Christ have the responsibility of “reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in light of the Gospel.”

(The Church in the Modern World, Vatican Council II, #4).

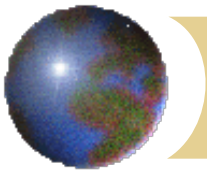
✚ The Bible does not offer a blueprint for modern legislation, but it can serve as a moral compass and shape the attitudes of those who believe in God.

(Immigration 2009, National Evangelical Association)



Theological Reflection

- ✚ Scripture: Old and New Testaments
- ✚ Theology and Sacraments
- ✚ Social and Moral Teaching of our faith traditions



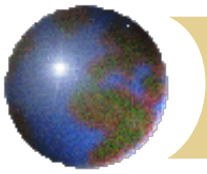
Scripture

✚ Old Testament

- ✚ Genesis 1:26-28
- ✚ Story of Exodus
- ✚ Leviticus 19:32-34
- ✚ Isaiah 10: 1-2 and Isaiah 58
- ✚ Jeremiah 22: 3-4

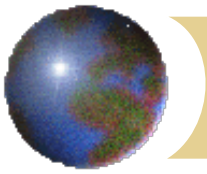
✚ New Testament

- ✚ Flight of Holy Family into Egypt, Mt. 13-15
- ✚ Judgment of the Nations, Mt. 25:31-46
- ✚ The Great Commandment, Mk 12:30-31; Mt. 22:37-40
- ✚ The Good Samaritan, Lk. 10:29-37
- ✚ 1 John 4:19-21



Biblical Context: Leviticus 19:33-34

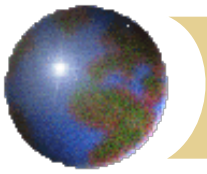
- ✚ When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.
- ✚ There shall be for both you and the resident alien a single law, a perpetual law throughout your generations; you and the alien shall be alike before the Lord.



Isaiah 58: 6-9, 12

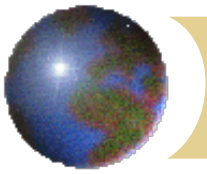
Is not this the fast I choose:

to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover them, and not hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly...Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and God will say: Here I am! ...Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of ruined homesteads.



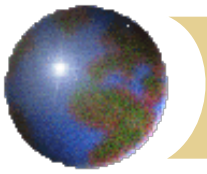
Isaiah 58: 6-9,12

- ✚ Challenge to the tendency to consider religious practices (i.e. church attendance) as sufficient for holiness, while considering the radical call of God's justice as impractical in "real life."
- ✚ Self-denial of the flesh must be accompanied by the self-denial involved in serving the needs of others and rooting out injustice (Roberts, 2001).
- ✚ One can only return to right relationship with God by endeavoring to live in right relationship with others
- ✚ Text based in refugee experience. We have chance to be "restorers of ruined homesteads."



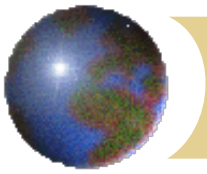
Matthew 25: 31-46

- ✚ ...For I was a stranger and you welcomed me...
- ✚ Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me.
- ✚ "Discipleship is not a passive privilege, but an active mission." We are not invited to relax and bask in the pleasure of God's love, but rather to bring that love to fruition on earth. (Virgil Elizondo).S



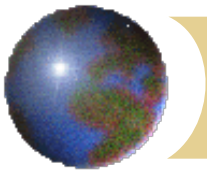
Incarnation & Imago Dei

- ✚ We are ALL made in the image and likeness of God
- ✚ Christian faith is incarnational – we both receive and become the body of Christ – God’s love made visible. We give flesh and substance to the gospel.
- ✚ One person is the sustenance of another wherever one rescues another from despair and offers something for which to live” (Hellwig, Monika. *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World*, 1976).
 - ✚ Jesus eats with the tax collectors (the marginalized) Mt. 9:9-13 – relationship as primary means of bringing about healing. Do our neighbors see us eating with, visiting, praying with our immigrant sisters/brothers?



Catholic Social Teaching

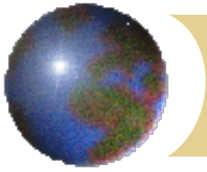
- ⊕ CST Principle: **Human Dignity**
- ⊕ The dignity of the human person is the ethical foundation of a moral society. The measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.
- ⊕ NASW Code of Ethics: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person. They challenge social injustice.



Catholic Social Teaching

✚ “Solidarity...is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”

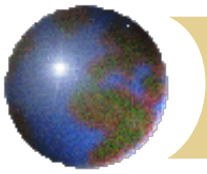
(On Social Concerns, Pope John Paul II, 1987).



Catholic Social Teaching

✚ A change of mentality is needed, no longer seeing the poor [or the immigrant] as a burden, or as intruders trying to profit from others, but as people seeking to share the goods of the world so that we can create a just and prosperous world for all

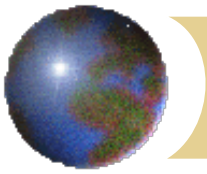
(The Hundredth Year, Pope John Paul II, 1991, #28).



The Nation and the Common Good: Reflections on Immigration Reform,

House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, 2010

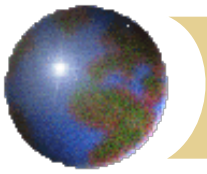
- ✚ The church was born out of the passionate conviction of a growing number of people that, united with the crucified and risen Jesus in baptism, and empowered by the same Spirit that empowered him in his humanity, they could welcome one another, and everyone else, just the way Jesus did. They rightly discerned the social critique embedded in Jesus' own total availability to others, and beginning with the admission of the Gentiles and the blurring of distinctions between slave and free, rich and poor, they organized themselves as a community geared to transform Jesus' personal example into a collective way of life that could challenge prevailing cultural and social norms. This has practical consequences for our approach to immigration reform.



Mennonite Tradition

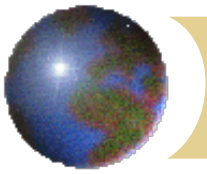
- ✚ To authentically respond to immigration, whites must start by seeing immigrants as “us” instead of “them.” ... After that, white churches must embrace risks.
- ✚ Throughout history, Anabaptists have taken bold positions at odds with the rest of society. Anabaptists stood up for their core beliefs during the Reformation. They held onto pacifist convictions during World Wars I and II. And there are many more examples. Anabaptists have taken risks in the name of God’s love before, so why not now?

MCC US Immigration Listening Project: What the Church is Saying.



The Call to Action

- ✚ Educate ourselves and then others about the issues related to migration and the experiences of immigrants and refugees.
- ✚ Create bridges between immigrants and refugees and various other people and groups and especially welcome them into our church communities.
- ✚ Promote religious tolerance and understanding as immigrants come with traditions different from our own.

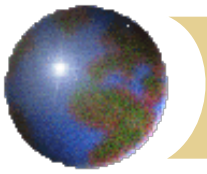


The Call to Action

✚ “Justice...has implications for the way the larger social, economic, and political institutions of society are organized” (Economic Justice for All, USCCB, 1986, #71)

✚ Work to improve relevant policies, procedures and services at your place of ministry to better serve immigrants and refugees.

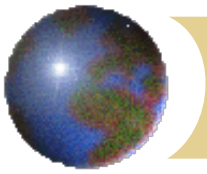
✚ Advocate for legislative change in immigration policy that respects human dignity.



The Call to Action

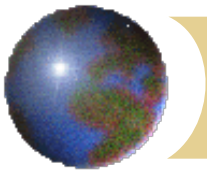
Strangers No Longer: Together in the Journey of Hope

- ✚ Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland. The root causes of migration – poverty, injustice, religious intolerance, armed conflicts – must be addressed so that migrants can remain in their homeland and support their families.
- ✚ Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families when they cannot support themselves and their families in their country of origin. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.



Undocumented Immigrants

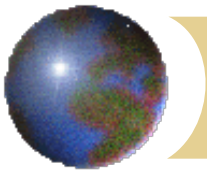
- ✦ Due to the limited number of visas, millions have entered the United States without proper documentation or have overstayed temporary visas. While these actions violate existing law, socioeconomic, political, and legal realities contribute to the problematic nature of immigration. Society has ignored the existence of an unauthorized workforce due to the economic benefits of cheap immigrant labor. Without legal status and wary of reporting abuses, immigrants can be mistreated and underpaid by employers, Deportation of wage-earners has separated families.
- ✦ (National Evangelical Association, Immigration Statement, 2009)



Undocumented Immigrants

- ✦ Ours is a migratory world in which many people move across borders to escape poverty, hunger, injustice and violence. We categorically reject efforts to criminalize undocumented immigrants and deplore the separation of families and the unnecessary incarceration of undocumented workers. Since, as we are convinced, it is natural to seek gainful employment to sustain oneself and one's family, we cannot agree that the efforts of undocumented workers to feed and shelter their households through honest labor are criminal.
- ✦ We confess our own complicit sinfulness as people who benefit from the labor of undocumented workers without recognizing our responsibility to them. We passively tolerate an economic and political system that accepts this labor... yet at the same time we treat them as a threat.

(The Episcopal Church House of Bishops on Immigration Reform, 2010)

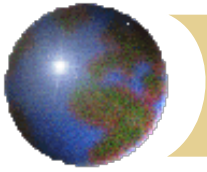


Christian Churches Together

February 1, 2013

The diverse group, representing leadership from Catholic, Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Orthodox, and Historic Black churches, agreed on these unified principles:

- ✚ An earned path to citizenship for the 11 million people in the United States without authorization.
- ✚ The priority of family reunification in any immigration reform.
- ✚ Protecting the integrity of our borders and protecting due process for immigrants and their families.
- ✚ Improving refugee protection laws and asylum laws.
- ✚ Reviewing international economic policies to address the root causes of unauthorized immigration.



Remember...

The first [commandment] is this...
You must love the Lord your God with all
your heart, with all your soul, with all
your mind and with all your strength.
The second is this: You must love your
neighbor as yourself. There is no
commandment greater than these.

Mark 12: 30-31