

**DIOCESE OF ORANGE**  
**STATEMENT ON IMMIGRATION REFORM**  
Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2006

Today we celebrate the birthday of our Church. This is the day that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, came to be with us as disciples of Christ. This is the day when the Holy Spirit empowered the followers of Jesus to announce and build up the Kingdom of God. You and I have been given the very Spirit of God to bring about the love for all people that is the hallmark of the Kingdom of God.

Recent news stories have highlighted the polarization that the issue of immigration has caused in our state and our nation. This is unfortunate. In California, immigrants live among us. They serve us in restaurants and hotels, clean our homes, harvest our produce, and tend our yards. They also provide us with technical expertise and skilled labor. They are our neighbors. Many are Catholics, and they worship with us.

Our immigration policy does need reform. As Christians and citizens of this great republic, immigration is a perplexing problem for all us. We need to remember that as Americans we pride ourselves as a country of immigrants. Our ancestors and many of our friends came here from all over the world to seek a better life. They came to experience the freedoms that are fundamental to our American heritage.

Until 1924, the American borders were open to anyone who wanted to settle here. We welcomed everyone who came to our shores. Yet we recognize the fact that there are increasing numbers of people who come here today without following the rules and regulations for immigration.

But the world has changed since 1924, and especially since 9/11. We still welcome the strangers into our country. Many of us wonder who these 12 million undocumented immigrants are, where they come from, and whether they will harm us. We have let “fear” rule our hearts!

As Christians, we cannot let fear rule us. Christ commands us to love one another – even our enemies! We cannot let the fear of losing jobs, of educating illegal immigrants, and health care costs be the major reasons for promulgating laws that violate our Christian heritage. Quite the contrary! We are mandated by Christ our Savior to find a solution to these challenges. This is how we love one another. This is how we love God!

We recall Christ’s teaching parable of the Good Samaritan that he offered in response to the question, “And who is my neighbor?” The answer is simple, “everyone!”

Jesus said in Matthew 25:35, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” Today the undocumented migrant comes before us like that stranger in whom Jesus asks to be recognized. As our late Pope John Paul II has said, “To welcome him (“the stranger”)

and to show him solidarity is a duty of hospitality and fidelity to Christian identity itself.”  
(Annual Message for Migration Day 1995)

As people of faith in Jesus Christ we need immigration reforms that include:

- earned legalization for the undocumented and their families, a temporary worker program, and timely family reunification policies;
  - restoration of due process protections for immigrants;
  - safe and secure national borders;
  - policy directions that address the root causes – so that migrants can remain in their home countries and support themselves and their families;
- reforms that do not include sanctions for those who provide humanitarian aid for the undocumented.

Finally, as Catholics who believe that America is “one nation under God,” we expect our public officials to work together in a bipartisan fashion to create a new immigration system. One, which respects our common humanity. One that reflects the values of fairness, compassion and opportunity. One that recognizes that we “are” a nation of immigrants.

May the Holy Spirit empower us, our legislators, and all people of good will, to achieve these goals in our immigration legislation. May the Holy Spirit bless you. And May God bless America!