



# Franciscan Family of the United States

Following the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Clare of Assisi  
*To Bring Healing, Reconciliation and Peace*

May 17, 2006

Dear Senator:

We write to you today as the leadership from Catholic Religious Orders and Congregations following the spirit of Saints Clare and Francis of Assisi. Collectively, we serve in every state of the United States in several hundred distinct ministries. **We write to express our desire for the immediate passage of humane and comprehensive immigration reform legislation.**

Many of our ministries serve immigrant populations. We have come to know these persons to be active and hardworking members of our neighborhoods and communities, whose chief concerns are care for their family and the betterment of their society. As religious communities, our interest in comprehensive immigration reform arises from the reality that the current immigration system is severely broken. Immigrants, both documented and undocumented, entering into the U.S. are suffering in the current system. As religious leaders, as pastoral ministers and simply as persons of conscience, it is our moral duty to voice this call for reform.

As the full Senate enters into this debate on immigration reform, it is our sincere hope that the resulting legislation and amendments that might be added will adhere to a basic set of social justice principles. For us as Catholics these are the same as our U.S. Bishops have delineated:

1. Persons have the right to find opportunities first in their own homelands.
2. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.
3. Sovereign nations have a right to control their borders.
4. Refugees and asylum seekers must be afforded protection.
5. The human rights and human dignities of undocumented migrants must be respected.

To adhere to these moral standards, at a minimum, the legislation to be passed by the Senate should:

- Establish a fair and manageable process for immigrants, documented and undocumented, to establish legal permanent residency and U.S. citizenship.
- Include provisions that work to maintain and/or restore immigrant family unity
- Provide opportunities for young immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to attend college as well as move towards legal permanent residency and citizenship
- Not have enforcement mechanisms, like those found in HR 4437, *The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005*, that attack the human dignity of immigrants, by “criminalizing” undocumented immigrants and those who provide them with humanitarian assistance.