

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



National Migration Week Statement of Francis Cardinal George, OMI January 2 – 8, 2011

“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1) These words from the first reading on this Feast of the Epiphany elicit joy in all of us as we welcome Jesus Christ more deeply into our hearts in this holy season and claim Him as a Guiding Light to our world. That same joy compels us to allow Christ to work through each and all of us to bring the Good News of salvation to everyone whom Christ places in our daily path and to those in need who cross the borders of our consciousness, including those who migrate to this country and other lands, seeking a means to support their families.

As we enter this new year, there are still many people who find themselves unwelcome, many who have migrated to this country, fleeing a poverty or oppression that has made it impossible for them to provide adequately for their families in their homeland. Like the Magi in today’s Gospel, migrant families seeking to support themselves and their families have followed the star of hope to seek the source of love and welcome, Who invites them to draw deeply from his love in order to live as his children and contribute to society.

Migrants and immigrants who have entered our country without proper documents live in the shadows every day fearing the possibility of deportation, of being separated from their spouses and their children. Yet while most welcome the economic benefits of their cheap labor, many condemn them for being here.

As people of faith, people who claim Christ as our light, we are called, like the Magi, to bring our gifts to bear to help the vulnerable among us. Like the Magi, we are called to seek direction and information that will lead us to the truth found only in Jesus Christ. Like the Magi, we are called through our encounters with Christ in the Word, in the Eucharist and in each other to go forth, transformed by our encounters, to bring the Good News that transforms the world.

As we celebrate this Feast of Epiphany, the celebration of God’s manifestation to the entire world, I ask Catholics to prayerfully do the following:

- Hold all immigrants in your prayers. Pray as well for our legislators to enact laws that respect the dignity of immigrants and all who are in need in our society.
- Reflect on your own family’s history of immigration.
- Reflect in your faith community about your ministry of welcoming, not only in welcoming people into Mass on Sunday, but in welcoming the stranger, especially the poor, into the consciousness and outreach of your faith community.
- Gather to dialogue about the reasons for so much current movement of peoples across the globe; about the need for all countries to develop so that their citizens can find work at home; about the history of immigration laws and the breakdown of those laws; about the positive economic impact of immigrants to our society. More information about the issue of migration and immigration is available on the US Catholic Bishops’ Conference website, www.justiceforimmigrants.org.

As people of faith, we are called to shine Christ’s light upon the laws, systems and individuals that keep many of our brothers and sisters in the shadows. May 2011 be a year of blessing for everyone. May we reflect in our words and actions the Good News found in Jesus Christ, a Light to the Nations a Light to guide our way to build a world where all are treated with the dignity and respect due all of us as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.