



Bishop David A. Zubik's Letter on Immigration

February 5, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

In my pastoral letter, *The Church Living!* (http://www.diopitt.org/pastoral_thechurchliving.pdf) I addressed the importance of building a culture of life by respecting all life. This includes respect for people from different countries, societies, races, and cultures.

"In Jesus Christ, the fullness of God's love is revealed," I wrote in *The Church Living!* "The love that Jesus pours out in His ministry, and in the giving of His very life on the cross, flows from the intimate union of love with His Father. It is the same love the Holy Spirit pours out upon the Church. *The Church Living!* is a sign of the powerful dimension of love within every human heart—love that wants and needs to connect with God and the world. The church, which Pope John Paul II called 'expert in humanity,' proclaims a vision of the world in which people may live in peace, freedom and truth" (#12).

Because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ, I want to raise my concern for the current immigration system in the United States. President Obama announced in his State of the Union address on January 27 that this will be a major initiative in the coming year and soon our legislative leaders will debate comprehensive immigration reform.

There are many of our brothers and sisters in the Diocese of Pittsburgh who are affected by immigration policies, including those seeking citizenship, refugees, religious workers, separated families, and students studying in the United States. As one family under God, we must insist upon just and comprehensive immigration reform that is based on the understanding that we are a nation of immigrants.

Immigration reform must establish new policies that offer a moral response to a broken system. Immigration reform must consider families and policies that keep families together. Immigration reform must offer a viable solution for those seeking permanent residency in the United States.

In *The Church Living!* I spoke of human dignity that is both personal and social. "Every person is a creature of God and thereby lives in relation to all other persons. This social aspect of each human person is also inherent in our own being and needs to be respected, not ignored" (#26).

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI said during his April 2008 visit to the United States that freedom "is not only a gift, but also a summons to personal responsibility. Americans know this from experience. The preservation of freedom calls for the cultivation of virtue, self-discipline, sacrifice for the common good and a sense of responsibility for the less fortunate. It demands the courage to engage in civic life and to bring one's deepest beliefs and values to reasoned public debate."

I join the bishops of the United States in supporting comprehensive immigration reform that respects the human dignity of the individual and the sacredness of families. In light of this, I have asked Deacon Alexander Wroblicky, diocesan Secretary for Evangelization and Social Concerns, and Mrs. Greta Stokes Tucker, diocesan Director of the Department for Black Catholics, Ethnic and Cultural Communities, to co-chair a Task Force on just comprehensive immigration reform. Their charge is to lead diocesan efforts to educate and inform the clergy, religious and all the faithful within the Diocese of Pittsburgh on current immigration issues, to implement the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' campaign for just immigration reform, and to propose strategies for action that reflect the Gospel and the rich social doctrine of the Church.

Please join me in praying for our nation and our elected officials that we may "never act out of rivalry or conceit; rather, let all parties think humbly of others as superior to themselves, each of you looking to others' interests rather than his own." (Philippians 2:3-4).

It is imperative that we have compassion for everyone, inclusive of immigrants, as we live, pray and work together in solidarity and especially as the Church of Pittsburgh; the Body of Christ.

Grateful for our belief that "Nothing is impossible with God," I am

Your brother in Christ,

Most Reverend David A. Zubik
Bishop of Pittsburgh