



**Statement of the U.S. – Mexico Bishops’
Committee on Migration
Diocese of Tabasco
June 2006**



We, bishops of the Commission on Human Mobility of the Episcopal Conference of Mexico and the Committee on Migration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, hosted by Bishop Benjamin Castillo Plascencia of the Diocese of Tabasco and joined by Bishop Angel Casimiro Fernandez of Quesada City, Costa Rica, have convened in Villahermosa, Tabasco, United States of Mexico from June 20 to June 22 to study the situation of migrants in the region. This is one of a series of meetings between our two committees since our episcopal conferences issued the pastoral letter, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, in 2003.

During our convening, we visited the Mexican-Guatemalan border and spoke with law enforcement officials, members of Grupa Beta, and local, state, and national elected officials about the problems of migration in the area and in Mexico. We also spoke with migrants detained by the Mexican authorities. We had the privilege of meeting with Dr. Luis Ernesto Derbez Bautista, Foreign Minister of Mexico, and Manuel Andrade Diaz, Governor of Tabasco.

We have found that migrants who migrate from Central America through Mexico in an attempt to reach the United States are subject to exploitation and abuse by human traffickers and smugglers and are, at times, treated harshly by Mexican law enforcement authorities. They are detained in deplorable conditions. They have no protection of law to ensure their well-being and safe passage.

The situation of migrants in this area is no different than in other parts of Latin America and in the United States. These persons migrate in order to support themselves and their families and intend no harm to the national security of Mexico or the United States. Yet we continue to witness that their basic human rights and human dignity are violated.

We recommend, consistent with policies adopted by both our Episcopal conferences that the following steps be taken to protect the rights of migrants:

- The enactment of immigration laws in the United States and Mexico which protect the human rights of migrants and provide them with legal status in order to ensure that protection;
- The convening of the governments of Mexico, the United States, and Central America to address the root causes of migration in this region, including economic inequities, so that migrants may one day have the opportunity to remain at home and support their families; and
- The establishment of cooperation between the governments to eradicate human trafficking and human smuggling rings throughout the region.

We stand ready to work with our governments to realize these important goals.

We call upon Catholics and others of good will in our countries to educate themselves about migration and the situation of migrants. Many misperceptions and misinformation exist about migrants which must be corrected. We urge all to open their hearts to the humanity of these persons who simply wish to find a better life, and, in some cases, to survive.

We encourage pastoral leaders to continue to provide pastoral service to these persons on the move so that they may receive the grace of God on their journey.

We will continue to speak out on behalf of the rights of migrants in the North America region and intend to work closely in the future with our brother bishops in Central America to address this important issue. We will continue to pray for the well-being of the migrant, who remains vulnerable but in whose face we see the face of Christ.

Released 22 June, 2006, the Year of our Lord, Villahermosa, Tabasco, the United States of Mexico.