

# JUST NEWS

*We answer God's call to transform human hearts and to make way for the Reign of God.*

Office of Justice and Peace, Diocese of Richmond

March 2006

## Justice for Immigrants: A Journey of Hope

*By Michael Stone, Director of the Office of Justice & Peace*

In June 2004, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Migration and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) Board of Directors resolved to make immigration reform a major public policy priority for the Church. Other national Catholic groups have joined the Bishops to seek justice and hope for immigrants living on the edge of our society.

This campaign works to unite and mobilize a network of Catholic institutions, individuals, and other persons of good faith in support of comprehensive immigration reform. Its primary objectives are:

- To educate the public, especially the Catholic community & Catholic public officials, about Church teaching on migration and immigrants;
- To create political will for positive immigration reform;
- To enact reforms based on the principles articulated by the bishops; and
- To organize Catholic networks to assist qualified immigrants obtain the benefits of any reforms.



In January 2003, the Catholic bishops of the United States and Mexico issued a joint pastoral letter entitled **Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope**. The bishops called for a massive overhaul of the U.S. immigration system. In this letter, the bishops outlined criteria for legislative & administrative reforms, including:

- ♦ Creation of a broad based process for undocumented immigrants to establish permanent residency in the United States;
- ♦ Family unification as a key priority of the immigration system;
- ♦ Creation of a legal pathways for migrants to come to the U.S. and work in a safe, humane, and orderly manner;
- ♦ Abandonment of the border "blockade" enforcement strategy; and
- ♦ Restoration of due process protections for all immigrants.

The bishops of the U.S. and Mexico recognize that the underlying conditions that compel people to leave their homes must also be addressed if an effective response to migration is to be achieved.

As a result, Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform also works closely with the Catholic Relief Services and other organizations to reduce poverty in Latin America through trade, foreign aid, and debt reforms.

For more information on how to support this Catholic campaign in our diocese, contact Pat Slater in the Office of Justice & Peace. +

## Focus on

### Immigration Reform

*Immigration is volatile issue in our society. Many seek to "punish" those who have entered the U.S. illegally. This issue of **Just News** explores church teaching and the need for comprehensive reform.*

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Immigration Resource Sheets  
Flyers for our Haiti Gathering  
& National Advocacy Day



#### Featured Web Site:

### The Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>

Includes parish kits, immigration facts, & public policy information.



## Past and Present

By *Elisa Montalvo*

In the early 1900's, my grandfather, a peasant, left Spain in search of a better life and landed in Honduras. He received a work permit and built a good life for his children. Yet, my father was denied entry to college because a dictator did not allow children of opposition leaders to attend.

My father moved to El Salvador and finished medical school. He was given a work permit, and all of his children obtained a college degree.

My husband was transferred to the United States by his employer. He was given a work permit, and our two daughters have a graduate degree.

The Catholic story in the United States is an immigrant success story. Our Masses in English are filled with descendants of Catholic immigrants

who came to the U.S. many years ago and were given a work permit. Like my grandfather, my father, and my husband, they put that work permit to good use. Now U.S. Catholics are a successful middle to upper middle class group.

Hispanic Catholics continue to arrive in the United States.

They work very hard to put food on our tables, roofs on our houses, and clothes on our bodies. Most of all, they pay the same social security and income taxes that we do.

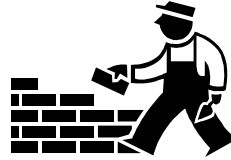
Because many of them cannot obtain a work permit, however, they drive to work without a license, are unable to buy health insurance, and are separated from their children. When they finally save the thousands of dollars it takes to pay a "coyote" to bring their children to this country, they are not accepted in

our colleges, even if they have been a straight A student in high school.

We have a great opportunity for our parishes to answer the Gospel call: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." Welcoming does not mean being polite, but changing things so that the stranger can feel at home.

Hopefully, the interfaith efforts for immigration reform will one day pay off. In the meantime, when we open wide the doors of our parishes to our newcomer immigrants, undocumented or not, English speaking or not, and change our parish life to accommodate to their needs, and to benefit from their gifts, we are making a difference. We are recognizing the many faces in God's house, and filling those faces with hope. +

*Elisa Montalvo is the Director of the Hispanic Apostolate for the Diocese of Richmond.*



### Just News

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## The ART of Justice and Peace for Parish Justice & Peace/Social Ministry

### Issue: Immigration Reform

**ACT** to serve human needs, giving issues a human face:

- ◆ Contact your local Refugee & Immigration Services office to see how parish volunteers can support the needs of vulnerable immigrants in that area.
- ◆ Organize volunteers to provide coffee, snacks, or other hospitality at locations where day laborers gather to seek work. Invite them to worship at your parish.

**REFLECT** on social causes & principles of our faith:

- ◆ Help organize a forum on the immigrant roots of parishioners. Ask them to share symbols of their cultural roots & discuss their ancestors' experience of church.
- ◆ Ask your parish Justice & Peace/Social Ministry Committee to read **Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope** by the U.S. & Mexican Bishops.
- ◆ Encourage your Minister of Religious Education to sponsor an adult education session on immigration. Ask OJP to recommend a speaker on this topic.

**TRANSFORM** social structures:

- ◆ Write letters to the editor of your local paper about the need for immigration reform that meets the principles articulated by the U.S. & Mexican Bishops.
- ◆ Join the Virginia Catholic Conference's Action Alert Network and encourage other parishioners to sign up. Visit <http://www.vacatholic.org> for details.
- ◆ Sign up for the Immigrant Justice Action Network of the U.S. Bishops' Campaign for Immigration Reform. Visit <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>.

## A Pastoral Perspective: Welcoming the Stranger Among Us



*Msgr. Michael SC Schmied is Pastor of St. Augustine Church in Richmond and Episcopal Vicar for the Hispanic Apostolate.*

My bi-lingual secretary recently entered my office to grieve for a Guatemalan woman with her four children. Having lived undocumented in Richmond for five years, her husband was removed from their home at 5:30am and taken to jail, threatened with deportation. This woman sought our solace and help. It's a too frequent occurrence in our parishes with Hispanic communities.

More than 1,000 persons attend our two Sunday Masses in Spanish and 2,500 are counted in our parish census. They seek solace and help, worship and Catholic faith formation in their native language, opportunities to serve, and a safe, hospitable environment.

How many are undocumented? Only God knows!

What is a just and compassionate response by Catholic citizens to these thousands of people, even if they are undocumented or illegal? They are real people forced to leave their cherished homelands and family members because of horrendous poverty and its terrible violence.

Our Catholic tradition calls for conversion, communion, solidarity, accompaniment, advocacy, and social justice.

In these times of the most massive human migration ever recorded, we all need to heed the African St. Augustine's urgent plea to "take and read" these contemporary Words of God ... and get on with the good, hard, daily, political, pastoral, prophetic, and personal commitment to "*act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly in the company of God and one another.*" (Micah 6) **+**

## Resources on Immigration

### Church Documents

U.S. and Mexican Bishops, **Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope**, 2003.  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml>

U.S. Bishops, **Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity**, 2000.  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/unity.shtml>

### Books

Ted Conover, **Coyotes: A Journey Through the Secret World of America's Illegal Aliens**, Vintage, 1987.

Desmond King, **Making Americans: Immigration, Race, and the Origins of the Diverse Democracy**, Harvard University Press, 2002.

Nicolaus Mills, **Arguing Immigration: The Controversy & Crisis Over the Future of Immigration in America**, Touchstone, 1994.

Caroline Moorehead, **Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees**, Henry Holt & Company, 2005.

David Reimers, **Unwelcome Strangers: American Identity and the Turn Against Immigration**, Columbia University Press, 1999.

### Web Sites

USCCB Migration and Refugee Services  
<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/>

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)  
<http://www.cliniclegal.org/>

Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network  
<http://www.cmfnc.org/>

National Immigration Forum  
<http://www.immigrationforum.org>

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants  
<http://www.refugees.org/>



## Key Themes of Catholic Social Teaching

1. Life and Dignity of the Human Person
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation
3. Rights & Responsibilities
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable
5. Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
6. **Solidarity**
7. Care for God's Creation

## COWS of JUSTICE



## Solidarity

- We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may live.
- We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, economic, or ideological differences.
- Practicing the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.
- We are called to love one another as Jesus loves us, sharing our resources and making sacrifices.

## Immigration Policies Just Don't Work

By Marilyn Breslow

Immigration is governed by a maze of laws, rules, and regulations. Three government agencies are involved -- Homeland Security, the Department of Labor, and the Department of State -- and coordination is difficult.

Citizenship and Immigration Services is famous for its bureaucratic failings, poor customer service, and long delays. It is not uncommon for Congress to assign special status to a threatened group and it takes years for implementation procedures to be established. Some immigrant groups walk around with expired documents and can only point to the Federal Register to prove that they are legally entitled to reside and work here.



The United States offers few legal opportunities for those seeking to come to our country. There are three primary ways to gain entry: your family is here, you have a skill in short supply, or you have sufficient funds to start a business and hire Americans.

You may also come to the U.S. temporarily if you are a student (with sufficient funds to support oneself), if you can do manual labor to fill temporary needs, or you are a wealthy tourist with strong ties to your native land.

Many who would like to work here, and whom U.S. employers would like to hire, cannot obtain work papers. Our law is inflexibly locked into unrealistic caps on the number of temporary worker visas issued.

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that our economy requires 485,000 full-time, year-round new immigrant workers each year. Yet current immigration laws provide just 5,000 visas for such workers annually.

Our immigration system limits the number of immediate family members that may join relatives here by geographic region. A husband may petition for his wife and children, meet all the qualifying criteria, and then have to wait five or more years because others have qualified ahead of him. It is hard to understand such a policy that unnecessarily separates eligible family members.

Recent immigration "reforms" have resulted in placing more people behind bars. Those seeking political asylum are routinely jailed and find it difficult to prepare an application explaining why one is a victim of persecution and would be in danger if returned to their native lands.

Others jailed are those with minor offenses. What most would consider a misdemeanor may be a deportable offense under U.S. immigration law. Such was the case for a young Cambodian woman in Richmond who wrote a

bad check. Two years ago she was deported to a country she did not know with a language she did not speak.

No one wants a broken system and most immigrants do want to come to this country legally. Until immigration policies meet the real demands of the labor market and facilitate family unity, illegal immigration is inevitable.

We can only hope that our law makers will in fact reform the current system so that immigration will happen in a safe, legal, and orderly fashion. +

*Marilyn Breslow is Director of Refugee & Immigration Services for the Diocese of Richmond.*

## To Be Somebody

By Azucena \*

Since childhood, my dream has been to be someone in life. My parents raised me to be a responsible person.

Five years ago, my family moved from a little country, Costa Rica, to the United States. It was a very dramatic change in my life. High school was wonderful; I enjoyed getting involved in clubs such as cheerleading and soccer.

I was considered one of the best foreign students in my high school. I was, and still am, involved in church activities, as well as some clubs and honor societies in my school. I thought I was doing a great job and the fear of not being able to attend college was not intense.

I decided to take some dual-enrollment classes during my senior year so I could be a little ahead and not worry about my parents paying all that money for classes. I thought I could at least attend a community college, and the idea of being accepted excited me.



I was in the process of choosing my classes when I got a call one morning saying that I wasn't going to be able to attend school that semester because I needed to get my legal status in order. I was very disappointed.

My parents pay taxes every year and contribute to the economy of this country. But that did not help me at all. I am still looking for a helping hand that could take me to that dream that I've always had. My education has always been and always will be my priority.

I give my best at everything I do. I wish there was a way I could make everyone understand the frustration and disappointment that a young woman like me has to go through in order to accomplish my dreams. Being an immigrant was not my choice, but I still have to put up with the obstacles that are given to me every day. +

*\* Azucena is a pseudonym. She is a parishioner in our diocese and a former member of the diocesan Youth Encuentro team.*

## The Immigration Debate in Congress

By Rev. Paul Brant, SJ

Before coming to the Diocese of Richmond in October 2005, I directed a project in North Carolina to promote legal alternatives to our unworkable immigration policy in the United States. These proposals were derived from Catholic social teaching and rooted in justice, economic sense, and service to the common good.



We worked with three Congressmen. All were polite, but we were eventually ignored by two of them because of a clamor of anti-immigrant voices.

A just solution to existing immigration problems would ensure that our country has the workers it needs to continue to grow.

This labor force would be immigrant and non-immigrant, as envisioned in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with free and legal movement of willing laborers in and out of the country. This movement would be guaranteed by a rational government policy which respects the needs of the economy, the need of the U.S. to regulate immigration, and the right of immigrants to equal treatment under the law.

The Sensenbrenner Initiative (HR 4437), rammed through the House of Representatives in December 2005 with practically no debate, is not a just solution. This measure would provide for the construction of a wall between Mexico and the United States. Defended as a means of securing our borders, it would cost \$9 billion in taxpayer funds if an “unintelligent” wall is constructed. It will cost even more if an “intelligent” wall (i.e., with advanced technology for detection) is constructed.

I recently came across a cartoon in **Reforma**, a daily newspaper published in Mexico City. It presents their humorous view of the wall. In it, intruders with the word “ILLEGAL” stamped on their hats emerge from a tunnel and say to the President, “We’re ready, George. Can we begin to build the wall?”



The reality is not humorous; if built, the wall will be a costly disaster.

Symbolically, this wall represents hatred and fear, as did the Berlin wall. Practically, it will force immigrants in search of employment to cross the border in ever more dangerous areas.

One thousand Mexicans have died in along the border crossing in the last several years. They will continue to come, and border smugglers will learn how to evade any “intelligent” technology intended to deter them.

Since 1986, the budget for the Border Patrol has more than quintupled, the number of agents has tripled, the cost for each arrest/detention has risen six times, and arrests have **declined** by 250,000. A fair person looking at this data would wonder if this approach is effective.

More technology has been added to border enforcement. But it can confuse legitimate activity with illegal entry. Border Patrol officers can be dispatched to find that the culprits are either Border Patrol officers or well-meaning, but counterproductive groups like the Minutemen.

Recently the Director of the International Organization on Migration was quoted that it is against the interest of the U.S. to build this wall and otherwise curtail immigration, specifically from Mexico: “that would be impossible. There are ways to regularize it and provide for the benefit of everyone ... [Mexicans] are going there not thinking to remain, but only to work.”

As many as ten million undocumented immigrants are already present in the United States – mostly in interior regions far from the borders. Funding for interior immigration enforcement allows agents only to make periodic raids to frighten immigrants, legal and undocumented alike, and to pursue convicted criminals to deport them.



These ten million people are at work. There is no evidence that they pose any threat to the nation’s security. For the most part they pay their taxes and follow the laws.

The Sensenbrenner Initiative would make all of them criminal felons -- like robbers and rapists. Legal residents and naturalized citizens would have to carry proof of legal residence or citizenship at all times. The bill would also make those who work with, and advocate on behalf of undocumented immigrants, accessories to their “crime” and liable to prison terms of up to five years.

This measure would also divert local law enforcement authorities from regular duties to enforce immigration laws. This would rupture the good relations that police have gradually built up with the immigrant community.

The Sensenbrenner Initiative does nothing to match the economy’s need for workers with sufficient work permits to fill these jobs. So undocumented workers will continue to come and employers will continue to employ them.

We all need to write to our U.S. Senators, urging them to adopt a truly just and effective reform of our immigration laws. We need to do it soon, since the Senate will begin debate shortly. Unfortunately, the deck is stacked against a reasonable, effective, and just outcome. +

Rev. Paul Brant, SJ does Hispanic Ministry in Charlottesville, Woodlawn, and Galax for the Diocese of Richmond.

# Sowers of Justice Seedlings

Activities of  
the Catholic Community and  
Friends Working for the Common Good



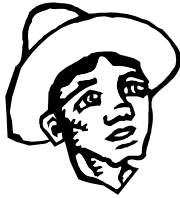
## Immigration Legislation

By Maria Minis

I became involved in the Hispanic community as a tutor of English as a Second Language. I am also a member of *Voices that Challenge*, a social justice youth group that works to address the root causes of injustice.

Through these activities, I become concerned with recent immigration proposals being debated in Congress.

The Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4473) recently was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. This bill covers many things, but focuses on two main points. One is tightening security on the Mexican-American border, and the other is imposing harsh penalties on employers hiring undocumented workers.



Title II, Combating Alien Smuggling And Illegal Entry And Presence, Section 202, subparagraph C states:

“Whoever assists, encourages, directs, or induces a person to reside in or remain in the United States, knowing or in reckless disregard of the fact that such a person is an alien who lacks lawful authority to reside in or remain in the United States, shall be punished as provided in paragraph (2), regardless of any official action which may later be taken with respect to such alien.”

This section fails to state what kind of help is illegal, implying that any kind of assistance is punishable for up to five years in prison.

People of faith routinely give help to anyone who needs it, regardless of religion, race, or documentation. This bill would jeopardize people practicing their faith. We should not be required to ask for documentation before we give humane assistance to another human being.

I believe that H.R. 4473, if enacted into law, would only hurt our country by forcing undocumented immigrants further underground. It would also put many people of faith who believe in helping others at personal risk.

“Undocumented” immigrants or “illegals” are people like us who have names and families.

For details about H.R. 4473 and other legislation, visit the Immigration Forum web site at <<http://www.immigrationforum.com>>. Now that I have informed you of bill H.R.-4473, I hope that you will help to raise awareness as well. +

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### EDITOR'S NOTE:

In the summer of 2004 ten youth from *Voices that Challenge* traveled to Arizona for an immersion trip on the border with Mexico. The group lived with Mexican families for three days, visited a factory that makes iron products for the electronics industry, and learned how low wages are for Mexican workers in their country. The *Voices* also heard stories about the many people who die in the desert while trying to cross the U.S. border.

For more information about *Voices That Challenge*, contact Teresa Stanley at (757) 641-1435 or <[teresastanley@nethosters.com](mailto:teresastanley@nethosters.com)>.

## Catechist Connections: Justice and Formation

By Debbie Stollery

This feature offers ideas for catechetical ministers to make connections between this issue's theme and their parish faith formation work.

For **CATECHETICAL LEADERS:** Parishioners may express discomfort about Church involvement in what it considers “political” issues. Read *Political Activities Guidelines for Catholic Entities in Virginia* at <<http://www.vacatholic.org/pubs.htm>>.

Offer a parish dialogue on immigration as it is illumined by such Scripture stories as the Exodus and documents



such as *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*.

For **CATECHISTS of Children:**

Introduce the Bible story of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt, becoming strangers in a new land, and Catholic social teaching on human dignity. Help children connect Jesus' own life story and that of people who come to America from different lands.

For **CATECHISTS of TEENS:**

Teens often feel marginalized. From this personal experience, help them to explore immigrant lives. One group can focus on legal immigrants and another on undocumented workers. Critique this experience with Catholic social teaching (i.e., dignity of work and worker rights), and identify areas in which U.S. law supports Catholic social teaching and where it does not.

For **ADULT FORMATION:**

Use local newspaper articles to introduce adults to immigration issues. Look for points of view that support human dignity, the rights of workers, and the dignity of work. Introduce material in *Just News* on the U.S. Bishops' endorsement of immigration reform. Help them discuss how our Catholic tradition supports American laws and where it challenges them.



# CALENDAR

## March

*Women's History Month*

**1 Ash Wednesday -- Lent & Operation Rice Bowl Begins.**

Order your ORB materials for Lent from Patrice Schwermer in OJP.

**26 Catholic Relief Services**

**Collection.** This collection supports CRS, Migration & Refugee Services, and the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. Parishes will receive materials from USCCB.

**26-31 National Migration Week.**

Resources on migrants & refugees available from USCCB at <<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/>>.

## April

**1 Diocesan Haiti Gathering** in Charlottesville. For details, see enclosed flyer. Contact Patrice Schwermer in OJP for more info.

**4 Catholic Advocacy Day in Our Nation's Capitol.** For details, see enclosed flyer. To register, contact Michael Stone in OJP.

**22 Earth Day**

**23 Creation Sunday.** For info on faith & ecology, contact Clare McBrien at (276) 762-5050 or <[cmcbrien@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:cmcbrien@richmonddiocese.org)>.

**24-30 TV Turnoff Week.**

Encourages families to watch less TV in order to promote healthier lives and communities. Contact the TV-Turnoff Network at (202) 333-9220 or visit their web site at <<http://www.tvturnoff.org>>

## May

**1 Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.** For resources on worker rights, contact the National Inter-faith Committee for Worker Justice at (773) 728-8400 or visit its web site at <<http://www.nicwj.org>>.

**1-7 Cover the Uninsured Week.**

A national coalition of employer, labor, advocate, and religious groups seeking to improve health care access for all. Resources at: <<http://covertheuninsuredweek.org>>

**13 World Fair Trade Day.** For info & resources on fair trade, contact Patrice Schwermer in OJP.

## June

**3 Sowers of Justice / JustFaith Annual Gathering** at Church of the Incarnation in Charlottesville.

Featuring faith & ecology speaker, Rev. Michael Dowd. Details TBA. Mark your calendars now!

## September

**4 Labor Day.** For worker rights resources, contact the National Inter-faith Committee for Worker Justice at (773) 728-8400 or visit <<http://www.nicwj.org>>.

**8-9 JustFaith Retreat, Program Orientation, & Reunions** to be held in Tidewater & Richmond. Details to be announced.

\* \* \* \* \*

**A Prayer For Immigrant Justice**

Blessed are You,  
 Lord God of all creation.  
 Through Your goodness,  
 we live in this land  
 that You have so richly blessed.  
 Help us always to recognize that  
 Our blessings come from You.  
 Remind us to share them with  
 others, especially those who come  
 to us today from other lands.  
 Help us to be generous, just,  
 and welcoming,  
 As You have been and  
 are generous to us. +

**SOURCE:** Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform

## Ecology Corner

*Each Just News issue presents some facts or reflections on our ecological crisis.*

### Office Paper Recycling

A typical office generates about 1.5 pounds of waste paper per employee each workday.

That's roughly 350 pounds per employee a year. A 15 person office generates about 2.5 tons of waste



paper in a year. You can do the math based your company's size.

Paper recycling at the office can be a challenge. The biggest problems are:

- the natural reluctance of people to change habits,
- the designed-to-fail nature of many programs, and
- the assumption of managers that such programs will run themselves.

In theory, paper recycling should be pretty easy. It begins on desktops and ends up at a central location where it is picked up by a recycling firm.

Of course, it's not quite that simple. A successful program requires that:

- ◆ bins be accessible and well marked,
- ◆ people understand what to do, and
- ◆ they are reminded of it constantly.

Many mainstream trash haulers offer help to set up, maintain, or improve recycling programs. Many companies are making recycling services part of waste-hauling contract negotiations.

An effective program can pay for itself by collecting and separating paper that has resale value. Usually, that's clean white paper. The more contaminants in a batch -- off-white paper, glues, staples, and other non-paper items -- the less valuable it will be.

SOURCE: Joel Makower, *Between the Sheets*, **Grist Magazine**, 31 January 2006, <<http://grist.org>>.

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 For information about the Ecological Network of *Sowers of Justice*, contact Clare McBrien at (276) 686-5039 or <[cmcbrien@richmonddiocese.org](mailto:cmcbrien@richmonddiocese.org)>.

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**April 1 Diocesan Haiti Gathering**

**April 4 Catholic Advocacy Day  
in our Nation's Capitol**



See inserts for details.

## From Mexico to Virginia

*By Tino*

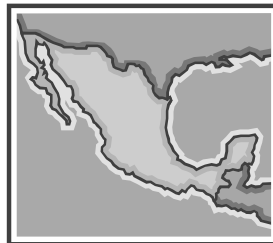
I am a twenty-one year old male who was born in Mexico, but has spent most of his life in the United States.

Migrating to the U.S. in search of better opportunities is the biggest challenge my family has faced.

My parents were first separated when my father came as an undocumented worker to the U.S. so he could send money to my mother and her three children. My father was able to obtain his residency and brought his family to the U.S. five years later.

In 1990 my mother, my two sisters, and I began our application process for citizenship. We began by trying to obtain tax identification numbers. This led to a three year wait to receive our social security numbers.

In 1994 we realized that we needed help with our legal documents. We hired an attorney for \$4,000 who promised to help us with the process. He robbed our money and we never heard from him again. We then had to continue the legalization process on our own.



Because of the backlog in the U.S. immigration services, it took fifteen years for my mother and me to attain permanent residence. During that time my mother was unable to go to her father's funeral in Mexico because she could not leave the country.

I attended one of the Governor's Schools for high school and took college level courses. When I graduated, I was unable to attend college because they required that I apply as a foreign exchange student and asked for paper work from Mexico that I could not obtain.

My family has struggled very much through this process but our Catholic faith is still guiding us. +

*Tino is currently working full time and hoping to go to college one day. He is a parishioner in our diocese and a former member of the diocesan Youth Encuentro team.*

The May 2006 *Just News* issue  
will focus on the theme of  
**Prison Ministry.**



The deadline for articles is April 10, 2006.