

The Call to Be Advocates for Immigrant Justice

Immigrant Justice Resource and Discussion Guide



This meeting kit is adapted from the resource and discussion guide provided by MSJC for use by Marianist communities (lay or religious) and parish groups who seek a deeper understanding and prayerful response to issues related to immigration justice in light of Catholic Social Teaching and the Marianist charism.

Introduction

There are five meeting kits dealing with Immigrant Justice, each of which is designed to be used for one evening. Choose one that seems most relevant or useful for your group and focus on that one at your meeting. All of the Immigrant Justice meeting kits use the same opening and closing prayers.

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, creator of all that is. While most of us live in safe homes with at least the basic necessities of life, we know that not everyone does. Those who suffer from inadequate income, food, or safety because of the color of their skin or the country

where they live are our neighbors. They may not live next door, but Jesus reminds us that even the stranger is our neighbor. Help us to be generous and welcoming as You have been to us. Show us how. Amen.

Food for Thought

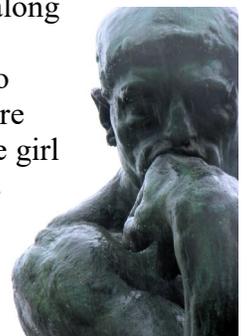
On March 18, 1958, Thomas Merton had an experience that redefined his monastic identity with greater involvement in social justice issues. Here is his description of the experience:

“In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the center of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.... There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.”

Two members of the MSJC Immigrant Justice Team share their stories of what drew them into being advocates for justice for immigrants.

“Before I was born, the country my parents came from was being torn apart by war. My parents were

just students at the time, and they, along with the other children and their mothers, were captured and taken to prisons far away, while the men were executed. During their captivity, the girl who would become my mother was taken advantage of, resulting in a child, my older sister. Years later, as the war was ending, they were released but not allowed to return to their homes. They were forced to head out in opposite directions, on foot, with nothing to sustain them but their wits and resourcefulness and the kindness of strangers. Many of their former friends and neighbors had died through all these ordeals. Eventually, and many miles later, they found their way to a camp set up by the United Nations where they were processed as refugees and allowed to live in the overcrowded and inadequate camp.



For years they tried to better themselves and make the best life they could, waiting for some country to allow them in. Eventually they met and married in hopes this would make them more acceptable for admittance than as single persons. In time, they were accepted into a European country on a temporary basis where they found jobs, worked hard, and had my brother and me while they pursued applying to enter the United States for a permanent home.

America was more open and welcoming then, and after several more years they were allowed to immigrate. They became productive citizens and taxpayers, dedicated Catholics, responsible parents, and eventually American citizens. And this is how I came to be the blessed and committed American citizen I am today. For this, I am eternally grateful and strive to always give back.



Today's refugees are essentially no different than my parents were. They do everything they can just to survive and to find a safe and decent place for themselves and their children. They have no choice but to try anything they can to make that a reality, even if it means going into a strange land to seek asylum or to hide. The difference now is not with the people seeking to come in but that this country is not the America it once was, and that is why we all must try to make things better to again be the life-giving country God created us to be."

Richard Sroczyński

"About 10 years ago, I attended a Pax Christi event and first learned about the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention center in Elizabeth, NJ. It was very disturbing to hear about the conditions under which people were being housed in this center. There were no windows in the building. The detainees had no time outside. They had nothing to do. They had limited access to communication with the outside world. Family members couldn't get information about their loved ones. They had no legal representation. Many times, they were deported and no one knew. All this was happening in my own state, and I had no idea about it. I made up my mind then to find out more about this issue, to help educate others, and to get involved in some way.

Over the years, I have been a visitor to detainees housed in the Hudson County jail and became involved in helping out "First Friends," a local non-profit dedicated to helping people detained in ICE facilities. They help with organizing visitors, housing people released from detention, and recruiting lawyers. My involvement in the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative's Immigrant Justice Team is a way to continue to advocate for change and increase awareness of the Christian response to this issue."

Pam Orłowicz

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What brought your ancestors to the US? What do you know of their stories?
- ◆ How is your experience with the immigration issue similar to or different from either of the two stories shared by the issue team members?
- ◆ What is it that draws you into concern about and involvement with social justice issues, and particularly injustices faced by immigrants?



CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful Jesus, as an infant you fled to Egypt with Mary and Joseph. You were a vulnerable family in a foreign land, looking for shelter and sustenance. Help us to welcome those like you who cross our borders

today. Give us hearts of compassion for all migrants; help us to shape a humane response to their needs and to pass laws and policies that respect the dignity of all who come to our country. Amen.

Some Actions to Consider

As Marianists and as Christians, what action might we commit to take (individually or as a community) to respond to this issue?

- Pray for immigrants, refugees, and all affected by the crisis at our borders.
- Study the immigration issue in more depth. Each person might take one of the resources or resource groups listed below and report back to the group.
- Participate in vigils, rallies, and other gatherings that advocate for immigrant justice.
- Visit or write to immigrants in detention facilities.
- Assist as volunteers at sites providing immigrant sanctuary.
- Become involved by writing letters to political leaders to uphold the dignity of life for asylum seekers and other migrants.

ACTION



Additional Resources

[Calling the Marianist Family to Renounce the Sin of Racism](#)

A call to action by the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative, with many specific action suggestions, that challenges the Marianist Family to commit to ending racism.

[Would Jesus, Mary and Joseph be Welcome in Our Country Today?](#)

A short reflection on this question

[Justice for Immigrants](#)

The campaign by the US Bishops to educate the public about Church teaching on migration and to create the political will for just and humane immigration reform.

[National Immigration Forum](#)

Advocates for the value of immigrants to our nation by promoting responsible federal immigration policy.

[Sojourners Immigration Action](#)

Immigration actions and resources from Sojourners, an interfaith social justice group.

[Interfaith Immigration Coalition](#)

A coalition of religious groups that calls on Congress and the Administration to enact humane and equitable immigration policy reforms.

[Hope Border Institute](#)

A Catholic-based organization that works on the Mexico/US border doing research, advocacy, and leadership development.

[Marianist Statement on Immigration Reform](#)

Sign up at <https://msjc.net/get-involved> to get the monthly *Justice Jottings* and *Immigration Update* from MSJC.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Related resources available at nacms.org include:

Things Marianist: "How Do Marianists Do Social Justice?", by Jim Vogt

The Marianist Founders and Social Justice, Felipe Melcher, SM

Introduction to Social Justice, William J. Ferree, SM

Marianist Charism and Our Life/Work Among the Poor, Joseph Jansen, SM

Marianist Community Meeting Kits are provided for the Marianist Family by the North American Center for Marianist Studies, NACMS. Additional kits, as well as other Marianist Studies resources, are available at <https://nacms.org/>.



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