Congregational Stance on Immigrants and Immigration

"For the Lord your God...renders justice for the orphans and the widows, and befriends the aliens, feeding and clothing them. So you must befriend the aliens, for you were once aliens yourselves" (Dt.10:7-19)

We believe that:

Every person is created in the image of God and endowed with a basic and fundamental dignity [Genesis 1:27-31; Justice in the World: Chap.1];

Jesus reached out to those on the margin of society and expects the same of us [Luke 16:19-31];

Catholic tradition and teaching has always called us to solidarity with immigrants and refugees [Pacem in Terris, Vatican Instruction on People Who Migrate, NCCB's Resolution on the Pastoral Concern of the Church for People on the Move];

God intended that there be a communal purpose for all earthly goods so that everyone has the right to have a share sufficient for oneself and one's family. (Gaudium et Spes: 69)

Solutions to all social problems must be compassionate, reasonable and just [NCCB: The Economy: Human Dimensions];

We recognize that:

The United States was founded by immigrants and our strength as a people lies in our diversity [NCCB: Statement on Migrants and Refugees, 11/8/86; S. F. Chronicle Editorial, 6/28/93: "Don't Slam the Door"];

Families and individuals have the right to cross international borders to flee religious, political and social persecution or to find relief from severe poverty [Pacem in Terris: 25];

Immigration involves two separate but related issues: one involves immigration policy and the other involves the status and treatment of immigrants [Mahoney: Testimony before Select Committee on Statewide Immigration Impact];

The United States has the sovereign right to control its territorial boundaries for it is responsible for good order, fair regulations and provision for the common good of its citizens [California Catholic Conference Opposing Anti-Immigrant Legislation];

The United States need not bear a disproportionate share of the world's immigrants but must have policies and practices that are fair, generous, reasonable and non-discriminatory [U.S. Bishops/Migration Committee: Origins 1993 p. 422]
Immigration policy should keep families intact [Mahoney: Testimony before Select Committee on Statewide Immigration Impact];

All immigrants have basic human rights regardless of their status; in turn, all immigrants have responsibilities to the society [Pacem in Terris:9; Universal Declaration of Human Rights;]

Generally, the root causes of immigration are in the country of origin and long-term solutions require the United States to use its influence to affect the political, social and economic conditions underlying the migration of peoples [Human Life in Our Day:131;134];

The net costs to the society for refugees, documented, amnestied and undocumented have not been accurately determined especially in the long run; what has been determined is that those who received their schooling in the United States have significantly higher earnings than those who did not, and that immigrants do not generally take jobs from the native born [Senate Office of Research:"Defining the State's Role in Immigration"];

Focusing on the newly arrived unfairly serves to divert attention from our inability or unwillingness to deal with economic recession, unemployment, poverty and crime when what is needed is sound economic strategy which deals with the new realities in our modern technological society [Mahoney: You Have Entertained Angels; Los Angeles Times Editorial, 2/21/93].

Therefore, we resolve to:

Increase our awareness of the contributions immigrants have historically made and are still making to the culture, social fabric and economy of the United States;

Build bridges between diverse communities, old and new immigrants, documented and un-documented.

Challenge the rising anti-immigrant sentiment, hate crimes and scape-goating of immigrants and refugees;

Aid immigrants in ways we can to make the difficult and often painful transition into American society;

Deepen our analysis and understanding of the root causes of migration, especially migration to the United States;

Work to ensure the protection of the rights of immigrants and refugees and challenge that which would deny them those rights or services essential to basic human welfare such as the right to education, the right to work, essential health care, due process under the law and protection from exploitation as guaranteed under the Constitution and the UN’s International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

Promote and work for the formation of policy and programs at local, national and international levels toward the development of all peoples in their homelands, respectful of their dignity and rights.