

Immigration & The Catholic Church



If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? (1 Jn 3:17)

As faithful Catholics and responsible citizens, we are duty-bound to pray for unity and to seek enduring immigration solutions that align with the following Catholic teachings.

Catholic Principles of Immigration:

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2237 and 2241) and Magisterial teaching:

- Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland (i.e., the right not to migrate).
- When the conditions necessary for a dignified life are absent, persons have the natural right to migrate to support themselves and their families.
- More prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent able, to welcome those in search of the security and means of livelihood unavailable in their country of origin.
- Countries have the right to maintain their borders and regulate immigration, consistent with the common good and with respect for the sanctity of human life.
- Refugees and asylees should be afforded protection.
- Immigrants have a responsibility to respect with gratitude the country that receives them.

The Catholic Church and Immigration Reform:

The U.S. Church calls for immigration reform to abide by key elements, grounded in Catholic social doctrine and the Church's teaching on migration:

- Humanitarian protections and due process.
- Family unity.
- An orderly and secure border policy.
- Earned pathway to citizenship for long-time residents.
- Expanded, reliable, and efficient legal pathways.
- Specific, proportional, and humane enforcement efforts.

Practical Implications:

Because of these teachings, we must reject any immigration policy (or lack thereof) which:

- Dehumanizes immigrants through rhetoric implying they are anything less than children of God, made in His image and likeness.
- Detains immigrants indefinitely or deprives them of fundamental human rights while in custody.
- Separates families, especially children from their parents, except where children are in danger of abuse.
- Deploys disproportionate tactics or resources against immigrants without criminal histories.
- Fails to safeguard the common good due to a lack of an orderly and clear immigration policy.
- Does not promote just wages and working conditions for citizens and noncitizens alike.

Immigrants in Ohio:

Individuals and families have come to Ohio seeking refuge from gang violence in Haiti, repression in Nicaragua (including persecution of Catholics), Taliban persecution in Afghanistan, civil war in Sudan, war in Ukraine, and other tragedies plaguing countries across the globe. They navigated the complex U.S. immigration system for humanitarian protection.

Federal law provides various avenues to live and work in the U.S., but there are movements to overturn these protections. Below is a brief overview of the types of humanitarian protections and their current state.

Forms of Humanitarian Protection:

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) – allows the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to admit immigrants into the United States from countries that are experiencing a crisis or instability (i.e., natural disasters, armed conflict, or other extraordinary conditions). The status is granted for a predetermined period and is subject to renewal.

Currently: Attempts have been made to terminate TPS before the current expiration date or allow TPS to expire for countries like Haiti, which faces widespread distress and violence, or Nicaragua, which has high levels of religious repression.

Humanitarian Parole – allows DHS to admit a person temporarily on a case-by-case basis for urgent humanitarian reasons or public benefit. This does not in itself provide a legal status. The paroled individual remains technically an “applicant” for admission to the United States.

Currently: Parole processes that allowed Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans to be admitted to the U.S., as well as individuals who entered a lottery seeking protection, have been revoked after they settled in U.S. communities.

Asylum – legal status granted to individuals who have experienced persecution, or have a fear of persecution, based on five protected “grounds” – race, nationality, political opinion, religion, or membership in a particular social group. According to U.S. law, noncitizens who are physically present or who arrive in the U.S. are eligible to seek asylum.

Currently: The right to seek asylum has been suspended indefinitely since January 2025.

Refugee Status – also a form of protection available to those escaping persecution. The primary difference between a refugee and an asylee is that refugees typically seek protection outside the United States prior to entry and undergo extensive vetting by the U.S. government.

Currently: The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) was halted in January 2025, resulting in thousands of refugees being stranded in third countries with an uncertain future. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, over 2,800 refugees came to Ohio from 35 different countries in 2023.

Resources:

For more information about the Catholic Church’s teaching on immigration, including resources and study guides, visit:

www.ohiocathconf.org/immigration

www.usccb.org/committees/migration/immigration

