

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

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Statement from Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago, in Support of Comprehensive Compassionate Immigration Reform Now April 11, 2013

On Sunday, April 21, 2013, Catholics throughout our country and world will celebrate what is traditionally called 'Good Shepherd Sunday.' In the reading for that Sunday from the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus says, "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:27) Jesus contrasts His voice with the discordant voices of those who would seek to divide the flock, separating them from the voice of God who seeks to unite them in life-giving love.

The discordant voices in today's society are many. Our voices of faith must rise above the crowd and speak out about the sanctity and dignity of the most vulnerable in our society. Our voices should echo the voice of Christ, our Shepherd, our Hope, our Peace. We are disciples of Jesus and must use the prophetic voice given us through baptism to address the injustices in our society.

Our national political leaders are once again poised to address our nation's broken immigration system. This is a critical moment, a time that the voices of the Catholic community and all faith communities need to be heard. Since 2005, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, through the Justice for Immigrants Campaign, has been working tirelessly to educate on and advocate for immigration reform. I appeal to the Catholic community of Chicago, and all people of faith and good will, to come together, unified in purpose, to raise our voices as one in supporting the immigrant mothers, fathers, men, women and children among us in achieving a path to full participation in our country's life. I thank all of those who have continued to work tirelessly toward this goal.

Now is the time to fix a broken system, a system that for too long has divided and devastated families through massive deportations, subjected them to mistreatment and discrimination by employers and others, and cast a crippling pall of fear upon the immigrant community.

I am appealing to the Catholic people of Chicago to join with me, with my brother bishops of the U.S. Catholic Conference, with priests and religious sisters and brothers, in this critical moment in our nation's history, to join our voices with the voice of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, to call our Congressional leaders and administration to pass compassionate comprehensive immigration reform legislation now.

Such legislation must:

- Provide a path to citizenship for undocumented persons in the country;
- Preserve family unity as a corner-stone of our national immigration system;
- Provide legal paths for low-skilled immigrant workers to come and work in the United States;
- Restore due process protections to our immigration enforcement policies; and
- Address the root causes (push factors) of migration, such as persecution and economic disparity.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, calls us to be of one mind and one heart in support of the dignity and sanctity of every human being from conception to natural death. May we continue to attune our hearts and minds to His voice, and then raise our voices to encourage and uplift those immigrant sisters and brothers among us who, as of yet, have not been allowed to fully add their voices, their gifts and talents, to our society.