



THE DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON

May 30, 2013

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

My parents were both immigrants who came to this country to search for better lives for themselves and their children. It was relatively easy for them in the early 1900s – government regulation was minimal and as time went on, appropriate documentation and citizenship ensued.

Today, our country faces a serious immigration dilemma. In truth, the system is a mess. An estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants live an unsettled existence and even documented immigrants have to endure years of separation from their families. Young men and women who were brought to our country illegally when they were very young by their parents and do not know anything of their former country, or in some cases even their former language, now live in a legal limbo. Some states, even our own, have resorted to taking anti-immigration enforcement into their own hands.

Not only do we have the undocumented among us, but many of our legal permanent residents often have to wait years, even decades before their families are permitted to join them. Contrary to what many people think, most undocumented immigrants pay taxes and contribute to the economy. At the same time, most public assistance is denied to them.

We did not become a great country by keeping people out, but rather by opening wide our doors.

I join with the rest of the Bishops of the United States in urging Congress to enact effective immigration reform that provides a fair pathway to citizenship and keeps families together. Remember, the majority of these immigrants are our brothers and sisters in the faith.

I do not advocate an easy path to documentation – I support appropriate and fair requirements for citizenship – but I feel very strongly that this immigration issue must be rectified. Congress must act now.

In the end, Jesus calls us to welcome the stranger, as He was welcomed as a child refugee in Egypt.

In the Lord's Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert E. Guglielmo'.

Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of Charleston

Office of the Bishop

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