

New Hispanic Immigrant Ministry in South Carolina

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The Diocese of Charleston is very happy to announce a new ministry that will serve the immigrant farmworkers in the Batesburg/Wad area where hundreds of immigrants maintain fields and harvest different produces such as peaches, vegetables, and some work in chicken farms. The farmworkers normally come to the United States under the H2-A Seasonal or Temporary Agricultural Work Visas. This type of work visa is obtained by employers for individuals who will be working in the United States. With this type of Visas, in many of the agricultural business in the Batesburg/Ward area, farmworkers from other countries, especially Mexico, stay in South Carolina for a period of 10 months, most likely from February to November, and then go back to their country of origin to spend the Holydays with their family and friends.

We are most grateful for this type of work opportunities that for sure benefits families in need of better future by establishing a seasonal work period in the United States that offers financial

stability to the immigrant farmworker family in their homeland. At the same time, the United States of America benefits from a hardworking people that comes to this country leaving all what they know and sacrifice their life working on the fields so we can have fresh produces on our table, especially during difficult times when the Covid 19 pandemic has damaged business and family stability. Thank you dear farmworkers for your dedication and gifts that you bring to this beautiful country.

Why will the diocese of Charleston serve this immigrant community with a new ministry? The reason is because during the time farmworkers live on the fields, the lack of personal transportation and busy days especially during the harvest time, they have very limited opportunities to attend religious services in the local Catholic Church where most parishioners gather every Sunday as part of their normal spiritual journey. The Catholic Church in South Carolina, following the call from Pope Francis in his encyclical letter *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 24, under the leadership of Bishop Guglielmone, is a Church that “goes forth” as a community of missionary disciples who take the first step...and welcome the outcasted, which in this case are those who live and work literally far away and are not able to attend spiritual services.

Bishop Guglielmone, fully aware of the mission of the Church, has invited the Vincentians Priests and the Daughters of Charity to the diocese of Charleston to start this important ministry for our local church. The Vincentian order will send a Priest, Rev. Orlando Cardona, C.M. to serve the Hispanic immigrant community that lives on the peach fields. Also the Doughters of Charity will send three missionary Sisters; Sr. Migdalia Flores, C.M. Sr. Consuelo Tovar, C.M. and Sr. Paula Gallant, C. M. to build up the mission by coordinating spiritual and social services in that area.

As Church, we are greatly thankful for the ministry of the Vincentians and Doughters of Charity. We see with hope their mission and trust in the Lord that spiritual fruits will be harvested at the appropriate time.

St. Vincent of Paul,
Pray for us.