



### ***Catholic Immigrant Integration Initiative Conference***

University of San Diego

November 28—30, 2016

#### **Recommendations Made by Participants during Concluding Session**

Participants, representing many sectors of the Church, including academia, social, pastoral, legal, and health services, parishes, diocesan entities, religious communities, youth groups, ethnic ministries, and others, were asked to answer the question, “How can the Church better empower and integrate immigrants?” The following summarizes the suggestions and recommendations made by participants.

#### **Creating a Welcoming Church**

- Bishops should adopt and promote a compelling vision and definition of immigrant integration.
- Bishops should hold meetings with clergy to make immigrants a priority population of concern to the Church.
- Each diocese should have concrete and explicit plans for how diocesan leadership, parishes and diocesan organizations will engage in immigrant welcome, empowerment, and integration.
- Each parish should be required to develop specific plans for comprehensive outreach and responses to immigrants.
- Bishops throughout the country should create a long-term strategic plan designed to prioritize immigrant welcome and integration, including the designation of a year-long focus (modeled on “Year of Mercy”) on educating Catholics about immigrants and refugees.
- Bishops should speak out forcefully and publicly about immigrants, highlighting the Church’s responsibilities for creating a more welcoming and just environment for immigrants.
- Target parish leadership for face-to-face outreach to educate about Church teachings and their responsibilities toward immigrants.
- Incorporate Catholic teachings on migration into small prayer groups and Gospel reflections, as well as homilies.
- Use existing parish-based campaigns, such as Operation Rice Bowl, to educate about and focus on immigrants.

- Develop mentorship programs at community and parish levels to match immigrants with receiving community members.
- Create a new “Church narrative” toward immigrants; one that underscores peoples’ of faith responsibilities toward immigrants and immigrants’ contributions.
- Encourage apostolic movements to commit to, and become involved in, outreach and service to immigrant communities.
- Develop comprehensive programs of outreach to immigrant communities, including such strategies as door-to-door contacts, information sessions at parishes, needs assessments, etc.
- Church leaders should promote parishes as venues of refuge (safe houses) for immigrants, especially for the most vulnerable.
- Create a more active culture of engagement and service among Catholics.
- Create “twinning” program to match parishes with vibrant immigrant outreach efforts with parishes struggling with how best to respond to immigrant needs.

#### **Leadership Development/Promotion**

- Create systematic parish- and diocesan-level leadership formation programs for immigrants/refugees.
- Ensure immigrant representation at decision-making levels of parishes and Church ministries.
- Promote the Integration of immigrants/refugees into Church leadership roles, including parish life, Catholic organizations, Catholic organizations’ boards, etc.
- Encourage lay leadership development among immigrant communities and have an “affirmative action”-type effort to foster immigrant inclusion on parish councils.
- Incorporate into religious formation programs the Church’s teachings toward immigrants, with practical examples of how Church leaders can foster welcoming attitudes and promote social justice for, and empowerment and integration of, immigrants.

#### **Developing and Disseminating Resources**

- Develop an app that connects organizations and parishes with volunteers, experts, trainers, and resources that are available to help develop the capacity to work with immigrants and to disseminate accurate information.
- Develop and disseminate “toolkits” for Catholic institutions to advocate and provide resources for immigrants, especially the most vulnerable.
- Design and encourage use of “community building” resources for parishes.

- Develop lists at the community and/or parish level that contain contact information about service providers available to assist immigrants.
- Develop and disseminate cultural sensitivity training programs and materials for use with government and non-governmental officials.
- Develop and disseminate “know your rights” and “family preparedness information packets” for use among immigrants without documents and those immigrants vulnerable to changing U.S. policies.
- Disseminate data about immigrant populations, especially the most vulnerable, to parishes and dioceses.
- Create evaluative tools for use at parish and service provider levels to measure efforts to empower and integrate immigrants.
- Promote the wide adoption of Catechetical materials appropriate for immigrants (e.g. St. Mary’s press in Collegeville’s series for Hispanic ministries.)
- Develop immigrant/refugee speaker’s bureau programs at national, diocesan, and parish levels.
- Create and disseminate legal services training programs for parishioners, diocesan staff, Catholic universities, and others who come in contact with vulnerable immigrant populations.