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Immigration reform is a pressing issue of morality

Jan. 30, 2010, 4:18PM

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On Jan. 11, more than 300 clergy from dozens of religious denominations came from the far reaches of the Houston region in support of a critical moral issue, humane immigration reform.

The local heads of several major religious denominations, including Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, Catholic archbishop of Galveston-Houston; Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of the Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church; the Rt. Rev. C. Andrew Doyle, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Texas; Bishop Michael Rinehart of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Rabbi David Rosen of Congregation Beth Yeshurun; the Rev. Mike Cole of the Presbytery

of New Covenant; and the Rev. Harvey Clemons Jr. of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, along with The Metropolitan Organization, released a Houston Interfaith Statement on Humane Immigration Reform and launched a campaign for reform this year.

All our faith traditions share a fundamental belief that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God and that we must treat every person with dignity, for "the strangers who sojourn with you shall be to you as the natives among you, and you shall love them as yourself" (Leviticus 19:33-34). The interfaith statement includes seven principles that are rooted in our holy Scriptures, our faith traditions and our sense of American democratic values, which include:

- upholding family unity;
- creating a legalization process for undocumented immigrants;
- protecting workers;
- facilitating immigrant integration;
- restoring due process and just detention protections;
- aligning enforcement with humanitarian values;
- immigration as a matter of human rights.

Immigration reform would make us safer as a nation because it would make immigrants register with the government so that we would know who is here and give us the ability to identify those few immigrants who have committed crimes. Giving immigrants a reason to come out of the shadows would also allow them to feel comfortable cooperating with law enforcement to help identify those who are a danger or a threat.

People often ask, "Aren't we rewarding illegal behavior by legalizing undocumented immigrants?" The truth is that immigrants are not interested in breaking the law; there simply have not been legal means created for them to do otherwise. As the Rev. John Ogletree, pastor of First Metropolitan Church, stated Jan. 11, "Undocumented immigrants have received an informal invitation to this country." In other words, because of an insatiable demand by the U.S. economy for both skilled and unskilled labor from abroad, we encourage mass migration to this country. At the same time we have a minuscule number of legal avenues or visas available for these workers and their families, which disrupts the natural flow of what economists call labor and what people of faith know as the right of families to migrate (a right that people have freely enjoyed for thousands of years). We must change the laws so that people are allowed to come in a legal way and to respond to the needs of the economy.

Another common question is: "Aren't we undermining our economy by allowing immigrants in when they only take jobs away from native-born workers and use welfare?" This is simply not true; immigrants contribute to the growth and prosperity of our economy. Studies by the conservative Cato Institute and the progressive Center for American Progress show that a legalization plan for undocumented workers would add between \$1.2 trillion and \$1.5 trillion to the U.S. economy by 2020.

We know from research polls that as many as 86 percent of Americans support proposals for comprehensive immigration reform that would legalize undocumented immigrants and require them to learn English and register

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2/1/2010

Immigration reform is a pressing issue...

Immigration reform that would legalize undocumented immigrants and require them to learn English and register with the government. Studies by the Pew Hispanic Center and the Texas comptroller estimate 1.45 million unauthorized immigrants are currently residing in Texas, working hard to contribute \$17.7 billion in gross state product. This issue is important not just to the religious community but also to the business community, as evidenced in support by the Greater Houston Partnership and Americans for Immigration Reform of sensible immigration reform.

We realize there are different viewpoints on how to solve this complex issue, and we welcome debate and difference of opinion by people of good will. We do, however, have a concern about the study cited by the Center for Immigration Studies in the Houston Chronicle article "Religious leaders' top wish: passing immigration reform" (Page B1, Jan. 12). This study claims that strong majorities of the faithful disagree with their religious leaders and instead support an enforcement-only immigration strategy. Public Religion Research discredits CIS' study, saying it "is not based on a scientific random sample of Americans but rather on an opt-in online panel survey."

We are not calling for an amnesty or open-borders policy such as our opponents might claim.

Our intention is to begin meaningful conversation in our congregations about the important moral dimensions of this issue and to urge Congress to act now.

This article was authored by DiNardo, Doyle, Rinehart, Clemons and the Rev. John Bowie, pastor of True Light Missionary Baptist Church and co-chair of The Metropolitan Organization.

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BrianSDCA wrote:

These religious leaders should realize that respect of the law is the foundation that has made the United States what it is today. Rewarding foreign nationals that are breaking immigration and employment laws and purposely taking advantage of our generous social services should not be rewarded or illegal immigration will never stop. Rewarding violators of any law begets more inappropriate behavior and disrespect of all laws. Citizenship or legal residency should never be given to anyone that violates immigration law.

1/31/2010 1:14:27 AM

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ScrapIron wrote:

From the article. " there simply have not been legal means created for them to do otherwise." REALLY??

And here I was under the impression that citizens of other countries who wish to emigrate to America had to go to the US consulate or embassy in their country of origin. Isn't THAT the accepted procedure? Illegal aliens (I will use the correct, if non-PC term) have always had this option. They just had to (and should still) RETURN to their country of origin. Transients who wish to come here to pick our crops should be encouraged to do so legally. Maybe an increase in visas for this purpose is in order.

Make no mistake about my position. Illegal aliens should NOT be hired. Without work, they will self-deport. Those who come to this country LEGALLY should be welcome with open arms.

They are the ones who assimilate; the ones who wish to do temp work and return.

Legal- yes!!

Illegal -go home !!

1/31/2010 1:48:00 AM

Recommend: (77) (13)

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belugajedi wrote:

The writer says - "We are not calling for an amnesty or open-borders policy such as our opponents might claim. ". The definition for Amnesty : the act of an authority (as a government) by which pardon is granted to a large group of individuals

What heavenly body does this writer live on? Of course they are calling form amnesty. To say otherwise is a lie.

1/31/2010 5:25:32 AM

Recommend: (65) (9)

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TexRancher wrote:

Sorry, but we turned the other cheek in 1986 and look what happened. Even more (20 million) Invaded our country, took what wasn't theirs and demanded more. Where does it stop? If our laws and the very sovereignty of this country are not respected, we will be over run and unable to help our citizens or anyone else in the world. ILLEGALS must respect the law and go back either voluntarily or by force. We are helping the countries they come from and they will benefit

from that.
The law is the law! Enforce it!
1/31/2010 6:54:09 AM

Recommend: (61) (9) [Report abuse]



nederland1978 wrote:
The Inn is full, go home and build the economy of your country and stop tearing ours down.
Almost All the construction jobs in which a license is not needed are done by illegals.
1/31/2010 4:56:21 AM

(73) Recommend: (59) (10) [Report abuse]



TXtoast wrote:
ClickJoin wrote:
I am Republican - and support legalization of people who have been here and held a job

Does that include people who have committed Identity Theft and used the SSN of another to get that job or those that work and do not taxes?
2/1/2010 9:23:31 AM

Recommend: (0) (0) [Report abuse]



jwwestiii wrote:
cc mom wrote: jwwestiii: What????
++++
My point was, and still is... "We will either attempt to document people living in this country, or we will not. Its that simple, and given the current state of political acuity with respect to dealing with reality, which tends to favor virulence and partisan pandering, I have little doubt what the choice will be. Now that is not a joke, and there will be few left to laugh laconically at the lamented limitations of languished largess."
If there is something that is not understood I will be more than happy to explain in very concise and exacting terms, which I assumed the original posting did.
2/1/2010 12:15:59 AM

Recommend: (2) (2) [Report abuse]



c.c.mom wrote:
Are you Ok?
1/31/2010 11:17:40 PM

Recommend: (1) (3) [Report abuse]



c.c.mom wrote:
jwwestiii: What????
1/31/2010 11:11:48 PM

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