

# Strangers No Longer Newsletter

## December 2019



### **PRAYER AND FASTING FOR FAMILIES IN FLIGHT - JANUARY 11<sup>th</sup>**

*“We see the suffering of immigrants on their journey, and often we get even more discouraged because we don’t know what to do. But we can do what Catholics do – gather in prayer for ourselves and fasting to focus on the families in flight”* (Fr. Dan Hartnett, SJ, Loyola University and St. Ignatius Parish, Chicago).



At 12 Noon on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020 at Most Holy Trinity Church (Detroit) we will kick off a 3-month campaign of prayer and fasting, coinciding with the National Catholic Migration Week. We’ll be hosted by Trinity’s Guadalupana Society. **Ask your pastor to include the attached flyer in the Sunday bulletin.**

Circles of Support will organize Holy Hours for their own Vicariates in February and March. The concluding Holy Hour, focusing on the Body of Christ being crucified today in the lives of migrating families, will be at 10:00 AM, Sat. April 4 at the Blessed Sacrament Cathedral.

### **PLEASE DONATE...!**

PRESENTLY WE ARE OUT OF FUNDS. Please consider sending a check. Please make it out to “Jesuit Community UDM” and send it to STRANGERS NO LONGER, 19972 Shrewsbury, Detroit MI 48221. Write “Strangers No Longer” in the memo line.

In 2019, you contributed \$24,321. About \$12,000 was sent to the Dioceses of El Paso and Brownsville for their work with detained families. About \$4500 went to Circles who requested emergency funding for families in need. We also paid for materials for retreats, meetings, trainings and staff travel. We have set aside \$5000 to enable us to bring YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS to our area in February (see article).

In the first 6 months of 2020, we hope to increase our work of building circles. We want to work with new Latino Circles, help our parishes develop strong relationships with immigrant families, and advocate for more humane policies toward immigrants.

### **UPDATE ON MICHIGAN DRIVER’S LICENSES AND STATE IDS FOR ALL MICHIGAN RESIDENTS**

State Senators Chang and Banks and State Representatives Garza and Hood want to extend driver's licenses to all residents of Michigan—whether documented or undocumented. They have introduced four bills known as the Drive SAFE Bills: Senate bills 631 and 632 and House bills 5192 and 5193.

Prior to 2008, driver's licenses were available to all Michigan residents, regardless of immigration status. For the past nine years, immigrants who have lived without a form of identification haven't been able to do simple things like buy prescription medicine, enroll their children in programs that require parents' ID, or even get a library card. More importantly, hundreds of families have been separated by deportation because of routine traffic stops.

Circles from St. Mary Student Parish in Ann Arbor and Our Mother of Perpetual Help Parish in Ferndale and Oak Park are combining efforts to help get these bills passed. Their first step is to meet with representatives from Chang and Garza's offices to establish a plan of action. The results of these meetings will be reported at the January meeting of the Assembly of Leaders so that all members who wish to can get involved. If you have any questions or suggestions, please email [strangersnolonger11@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger11@gmail.com)

### **ASSEMBLY CIRCLE OF LEADERS**

**Saturday, January 18, 10:00 AM – Noon**  
**St. James (Ferndale) 241 Pearson on Woodward**  
**between 8 and 9 Mile Roads**

Anyone interested in forming a Circle of Support at your parish should consider attending this meeting. Circle Leaders meet bi-monthly in order to build a community among ourselves, learn best practices, help each other start and grow our parish Circles of Support, inspire and challenge each other be true to the Gospel and the exhortations of Pope Francis, and make decisions about projects and direction. For more info: 313-549-0421 or [billobrien2018@gmail.com](mailto:billobrien2018@gmail.com)

### **NEW CIRCLES OF SUPPORT – WHAT ABOUT YOUR PARISH?**

Parishioners all over SE Michigan and beyond are meeting with their pastors and gathering some fellow parishioners to discuss what it means to have a Circle of Support in their parishes. Parishioners at St. Ambrose (Grosse Pointe), Our Lady of Sorrows (Farmington), Corpus Christi (Detroit), St. Patrick (Brighton), Christ Our Light (Troy) – and staff at Casa Guadalupana (adult learning center in SW Detroit) – are all discussing plans to establish a Circle. Maybe you should consider creating a Circle in your parish/congregation!

**What do Circles do?** Educate in the parish/congregation, provide direct support/accompaniment to families in crisis, advocate with officials for more humane policies and practices locally, regionally and nationally. Contact Bill O'Brien, 313-549-0421, or [billobrien2018@gmail.com](mailto:billobrien2018@gmail.com) – to inquire...!



### **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS GATHER FEB. 6**

**YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS** – delegations from 10+ Catholic High Schools will meet face-to-face with 4 young leaders from Mexico and El Salvador. “This will be exciting, because we’ll be getting students involved and excited about immigration and solidarity,” says Luke Miller, Campus Minister at Cristo Rey. “And our Cristo Rey students will be running small group meetings with other students from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds. It’s part and parcel to who we are as

Catholics to do this and to speak out and be leaders in our community.”

Brother Rice Campus Minister Thane Hall is excited because 5 of his students just returned from the border. “They saw first-hand what migrating families are suffering – and were inspired by what Catholics along the border are doing to respond to immigrants as brothers and sisters. The conference will be an expansion of that experience, involving more students,” says Hall.

The 4 YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS will travel here Feb. 5-10 on tourist visas escorted by Alianza Americas ([www.alianzaamericas.org](http://www.alianzaamericas.org)), thanks to a generous donation by a SNL family. To schedule them for your parish, vicariate or university, call Strangers No Longer, 313-549-0421.



**LATE BREAKING NEWS: CATHOLIC YOUNG ADULT LEADERS ORGANIZE SUMMIT FEB. 9**

*“We often hear about the suffering that drives people to leave their homelands. But we never get the chance to hear about the extraordinary creativity of young people in Mexico and Central America. Young people understand the inter-connected reality of our world and our communities, and they are expressing it in dynamic and creative ways through art, poetry, music, and theater. By making the connections from young people to young people --and using art and culture*

*as an entry point, many of the barriers we may think we have can fall away.” (Alianza Americas)*

On Sunday February 9th, leaders of young adult groups associated with Catholic parishes and religious orders will meet with YOUTH LEADERS ACROSS BORDERS at Ss. Peter and Paul (Jesuit) Catholic Church. The gathering will begin at 5 PM, with Dialogue at 6:00 PM, and Mass at 7:30 PM.

The four YOUTH LEADERS are from Mexico and El Salvador, and work to rebuild hope and inspiration in their communities. They formed “Otros Dreams en Accion,” focusing on families who are deported back to Mexico, some having been in the US for 20 years. Some don’t speak Spanish and really have no connections back in Mexico. In El Salvador, the “Grafitur” project operates in four of the most dangerous and marginalized neighborhoods of San Salvador, providing a range of after-school art and music opportunities to children and youth, with a vibrant teen-led center that includes a computer lab, dance classes, and recording studio.

Leaders from the following Young Adult Groups are organizing the event: Ss. Peter and Paul (Jesuit) Church, Tap Into Life (Capuchins), Mercy Volunteers, UD Mercy Law School Caucus on Immigration, Jesuit Volunteer Corps, UD Mercy Campus Ministry, Christ the Good Shepherd Parish. For more information, contact Ms. Mara Rutten at 313-961-8077x204 or email Ss. Peter and Paul (Jesuit) at [parishlife@sspjesuit.org](mailto:parishlife@sspjesuit.org)



## **SNL STRATEGY TEAM MEETING**

The Strategy Team met on December 2nd for a two hour workshop. The main topic was the vision and structure of the organization going forward.

A draft Vision Statement was developed:

*“We hear the call of our Scriptures and Catholic Social Teaching to love and do justice and to honor the dignity of every human being and the sacredness of all creation. We seek to strengthen our congregations by being in relationship with immigrants, learning from their experience and culture, standing with them in support, and advocating for policies reflective of these values.”*

The draft Mission Statement was developed:

*“Strangers No Longer is a network of parishes and congregations creating Circles of Support to learn from and provide assistance to immigrants and to advocate for a comprehensive and humane immigration policy through education, direct support/accompaniment and advocacy.”*

A chairperson, secretary and treasurer were elected. The following individuals were nominated and unanimously approved:

- Chairperson – Rosemary Insley
- Secretary – Kathy Faba
- Treasurer – Sharon Bender

The proposed organizational chart was discussed and confirmed. It was recognized at an earlier meeting that, as the organization grows, it would be helpful to identify individuals to concentrate on

each of the three pillars: education, advocacy, and direct support. It was decided at this latest meeting that Shepherd roles must be filled now and that the Strategy Team would choose the Shepherds. It was also decided that the Shepherd roles should be teams rather than individuals. The following individuals were named:

- **Education Shepherds:** Bill O’Brien - lead, Rosemary Insley, Sharon Bender
- **Advocacy Shepherds:** Rich Faba – lead, Karen Donahue, Bridget Theodoroff
- **Direct Support Shepherds:** Marie Schimelfening - lead, Pat Lamb, Amelia Mata



**Get Involved!**

## **THE MYTHS VS. THE FACTS**

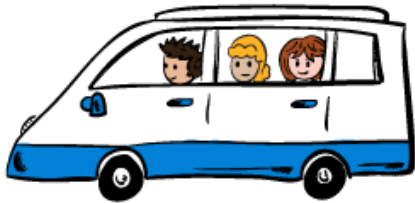
How do you talk to people you know about the plight of immigrants today? You need to combat the myths with facts! At the end of this newsletter, or at this link:

<https://www.adl.org/resources/fact-sheets/myths-and-facts-about-immigrants-and-immigration-en-espanol>

You will find “Myths and Facts About Immigrants and Immigration,” with 9 items that are only 2-3 paragraphs in length and are perfect for 9 weekly parish bulletin inserts. **Ask your pastor to publish them in your bulletin in 9 installments during our Campaign of Prayer and Fasting for Families in Flight (Jan. 11 – April 4). Print one myth every weekend.**

The 9 items have titles such as **Myth #1:** Immigrants are overrunning our country, and most are here illegally. **Myth #2:** Immigrants bring crime and violence to our cities and towns. **Myth #3:** Immigrants hurt our country financially by taking jobs and services without paying taxes.

Thank you to Sr. Karen Donahue, RSM, of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team (and the Strangers No Longer Strategy Team) for helping us educate people on this subject.



### **BE A SNL DRIVER**

Our Circles sometime need help from outside their Circle driving a family to court, or a doctor’s appointment, etc. Let us know if you want to be on our list of contacts to help now and then with driving. Contact [strangersnolonger1@gmail.com](mailto:strangersnolonger1@gmail.com) or call 313-549-0421.

### **CAMPAIGN TO SUPPORT SHELTER IN MEXICO KICKED OFF AT OUR MOTHER OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH**

The Circle at Our Mother of Perpetual Help (OMOPH) kicked off a campaign to support the Casa Samaritano Shelter in Hidalgo, Mexico after Masses during the weekend of December 7h and 8h. The event was well received by the parish.

Sisters of the Sacred Heart run Casa Samaritano, which sits alongside a railroad track and is a resting point for people fleeing their homes in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. They often arrive by riding on the top of the train cars. The train has come to be called “The Beast” because so many lose limbs when they fall (or are pushed by gangs) from the train on their exhausting and dangerous journey north.



The OMOPH Circle will conduct monthly collections and fundraising events in 2020 so they can help the Sisters provide food, clean clothing, showers, and cots to the hundreds who are migrating. To help, call contact Rosemary Insley at 248-885-2406 or email her at [rinsley@aol.com](mailto:rinsley@aol.com).

## A Different Oral Argument

*Today, November 12, the US Supreme Court  
is hearing oral arguments on DACA.  
Arguments on whether this pro-life  
Country  
Will let me keep the life  
I lead.*

*I don't want to argue.  
I don't want to talk to them.  
The only people I want to talk to are  
Other undocumented young people  
Many with DACA, many without.*

*So this is to you, my loves.  
We are not an argument.  
We are warm honey  
And the smell of cinnamon sticks  
Simmering on the stove late at night.*

*We are sweet like guava fruit,  
And prickly like cactus in the sun.  
Ripe with possibility, wrapped  
In self-protection.*

*We are powerful like our mothers,  
Who break English in order to survive it.  
We are gentle like our fathers  
holding their new grandsons for the first time.*

*We are not an oral argument.*

*We are poetry dancing in the streets,  
Hymns reminding us that  
We survive each day despite  
A military state trying to crush us.*

*How amazing it is that we are still here.  
Powerful, and kind,  
And beautiful, and yes  
Resilient.  
But most importantly  
My dears  
Most importantly, we are loved.  
We are loved by our families and communities  
Who crossed oceans and deserts  
To give us this life.  
This love is stronger than a supreme court decision,  
stronger than ICE,  
Stronger than foolish  
Arguments about whether or not we deserve to  
stay.*

*We already stayed. Now it's time to live.*

-----Maria Ibarra (UD Mercy 2017 Grad;  
Staffmember, We the People)



# Myths and Facts About Immigrants and Immigration

## Presented by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL)

### **Myth #1: Immigrants are overrunning our country, and most are here illegally.**

#### **The Facts:**

It is true that there are more immigrants living in the U.S. than ever before. However, the percentage of immigrants in the overall population is not much different than many other times throughout our history. Today immigrants make up approximately 13.5% of the total U.S. population. From 1900 to 1930, immigrants made up between 12% and 15% of the population, and similar spikes occurred in the 1850s and 1880s. During those periods immigrants successfully became part of U.S. society, helping to build the thriving and diverse country we have now, and there is no reason to believe today's immigrants will be any different.

More than sixty percent of immigrants in the United States today have lived here for at least 15 years, and the large majority (76%) of immigrants have lawful status. Of the approximately 43.7 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2016, 20.2 million (approximately 44.7 percent) were naturalized citizens. Together, lawful permanent residents (sometimes referred to as green card holders), people in the United States on temporary visas including student and work visas, refugees and people seeking asylum, and undocumented immigrants made up the remaining 55.3 percent of immigrants.

In 2016, there were 10.7 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., or less than 3.5 percent of the nation's population. This represents a significant decrease (13%) from the 12.2 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2007, and is the lowest total since 2004.

### **Myth #2: Immigrants bring crime and violence to our cities and towns.**

#### **The Facts:**

Recently, public figures have claimed that immigrants are “killers” and “rapists,” bringing crime to the U.S. Study after study has shown, however, that immigrants—regardless of where they are from, what immigration status they hold, and how much education they have completed—are less likely than native-born citizens to commit crimes or become incarcerated. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, while the overall percentage of immigrants and the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. both increased sharply between 1990 and 2010, the violent crime rate in the U.S. during that time plummeted 45 percent and the property crime rate dropped by 42 percent. Studies have consistently found that immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans and that there is a negative correlation between levels of immigration and crime rates. Other studies have in fact found that crime rates are lowest in states with the highest immigration growth rates, and that states with larger shares of undocumented immigrants tend to have lower crime rates than states with smaller shares.

### **Myth #3: Immigrants hurt our country financially by taking jobs and services without paying taxes.**

#### **The Facts:**

Though some people claim that immigrants are taking job opportunities away from people born in the U.S., immigrants actually help to create new jobs. In addition to buying U.S. and local products, which helps create jobs, immigrants often start their own businesses. In fact, immigrants are twice as likely to start businesses as citizens born in the U.S., and companies owned by immigrants are more likely to hire employees than companies

owned by native-born citizens. States with large numbers of immigrants report lower unemployment rates for everyone.

Immigrants collectively pay between \$90 and \$140 billion each year in taxes, and a recent study found that undocumented immigrants alone pay approximately \$11.64 billion in taxes each year. Moreover, undocumented immigrants nationwide pay an estimated 8 percent of their income in state and local taxes (their effective state and local tax rate), which is higher than the effective tax rate of the top 1 percent of all taxpayers in the U.S.

Everyone pays sales taxes on goods they purchase and property taxes on the homes they buy or rent, and more than half of all undocumented immigrant households file income tax returns using Individual Tax Identification Numbers.

**Myth #4: Immigrants are coming to the U.S. to obtain welfare and other benefits.**

**The Facts:**

Most immigrants who come to this country work hard to take care of their families and themselves. Many studies have shown that on average immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits, meaning the taxes they pay more than cover the cost of things like public education and healthcare.

With very few exceptions (such as access to medical care for victims of human trafficking), undocumented immigrants are not eligible for federal public benefits such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare and food stamps. In addition, most immigrants with lawful status are not entitled to these benefits until they have been in the country for five years or longer. This means that Social Security is often being deducted from immigrants' paychecks but they cannot access those benefits. According to a 2018 study by the CATO Institute, eligible immigrants use 27% fewer

benefits relative to U.S. natives of similar incomes and ages.

**Myth #5: Immigrants are coming to the U.S. with the express purpose of having babies here.**

**The Facts:**

The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside." People commonly refer to this right as "birthright citizenship." Some claim that undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. to take advantage of this right. Research consistently shows, however, that the vast majority of immigrants (both with lawful status and those who are undocumented) come to the U.S. for economic opportunity or to flee violence or poverty in their birth countries. Immigration trends—both over the last few decades and throughout history—show that immigration increases when the U.S. economy is booming and it decreases when the U.S. economy is doing less well, supporting the findings that people come for economic opportunity.

If people were coming to the U.S. with the express purpose of having children here, we would expect to see at least the same number of women as men. There are many more young immigrant men coming to the U.S., however, than young women.

Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens cannot petition for a green card for a foreign parent until they turn 21. In the meantime, the parent would have to live as an undocumented immigrant, often in very difficult conditions. When asked why they come to the U.S., undocumented immigrants consistently cite other reasons for migrating, not the desire to have a baby here.



**Myth #6: Immigrants are bringing diseases into the U.S.**

**The Facts:**

Although people have claimed that undocumented immigrants have brought diseases to the U.S., including measles, hepatitis C, HIV, tuberculosis, and even Ebola, the allegations are not supported. There is no evidence that immigrants have been the source of any modern outbreaks in the U.S. According to the World Health Organization, 113 countries, including many countries in Latin America, have higher vaccination rates for 1-year-olds than the U.S. Mexico, for example, has a 99 percent vaccination rate for measles while Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have around a 93 percent vaccination rate. The vaccination rate in the U.S., by comparison, is approximately 92 percent. The vast majority of immigrants arriving in the U.S. have been screened for health issues.

**Myth #7: Terrorists are infiltrating the U.S. by coming across the border with Mexico.**

**The Facts:**

There is no credible evidence that terrorists are entering the U.S. through the border with Mexico. In 2014, the Department of Homeland Security noted that “the suggestion that individuals that have ties to ISIL have been apprehended at the southwest border is categorically false, and not supported by any credible intelligence or facts on the ground.” And, according to a more recent report released by the U.S Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism in 2017, “Counterterrorism cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. governments remained strong. There are no known international terrorist organizations operating in Mexico, no evidence that any terrorist group has targeted U.S. citizens in Mexican territory, and no credible information that any member of a terrorist group has traveled through Mexico to gain access to the United States.” In fact, the vast majority of U.S. residents linked to terror since 2002 are U.S. citizens.

**Myth #8: All undocumented immigrants sneak across the Mexican border.**

**The Facts:**

Although many people commonly think of undocumented immigrants as people who have snuck across the Mexican border, current estimates suggest that somewhere between one third and one half of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. have overstayed their visitor, student or work visas. That means that they entered the U.S. with lawful documentation and only later became undocumented.

**Myth #9: We can stop undocumented immigrants coming to the U.S. by building a wall along the border with Mexico.**

**The Facts:**

A wall or a fence along the entire border with Mexico would be impractical and very likely ineffective. The border between the U.S. and Mexico is almost 2,000 miles long. It spans difficult terrain, including deserts and mountains. Rivers flow along two thirds of the border. Much of the area is private property, which the government would have to buy from the owners to build a fence or wall, and many do not want to sell the land. The logistics alone make building a wall very difficult, if not impossible.

From the Great Wall of China to the Berlin Wall, history shows us that people find ways to cross walls. Experts predict that a wall along the entire length of the border would lead coyotes—human smugglers who charge migrants high rates to cross the border—to dig tunnels and create breaches. This would increase smuggling prices, making the process simply more lucrative for those exploiting migrants.

As long as there is poverty, violence and persecution in other parts of the world, people will continue to come to the U.S. to seek a better life, no matter how big a wall we build. The U.S. prides

itself on being a “nation of immigrants,” and on the values of fairness and equality. It is possible to create a process for addressing immigration that treats immigrants with dignity and respect instead of as criminals.

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