***The Immigration Crisis & Our Faith***

***SNL Webinar: June 23rd, 2020 at 7:00 pm***

1. Welcome-Bill O’Brien
   1. Preregistration-295 people from 96 different organizations
   2. Focus: crisis of immigration and our faith (but also keeping in mind other crises of our current world-racial injustice, COVID, climate change, etc.)
   3. SNL was created three years ago based on USCCB statement on immigration reform
   4. SNL panelists would love to come out to our Circles of Support to do “deep dives” on what is presented here tonight
   5. Biblical reflection (Moses’ prayer to God)
2. Catholic Social Teaching-Father Dave Buersmeyer (St. Regis)
   1. Who am I responsible to? Catholic Church is clear; we are responsible to our community and welfare of everyone in it
   2. Formed by (shaped and misshaped) by political, economic realities
   3. Story of salvation in scripture: sin keeps us from God
   4. Test of our integrity is how we treat the most vulnerable in our community
   5. Church=belonging to the community of God
   6. Catholic principals developed in last 130 years to help us live in the complex political and economic realities=Catholic Social Doctrine/Social Teaching
      1. Every person is made in image and likeness of God; every person has a fundamental dignity that is intrinsic and inviolable
      2. Common good-sum total of conditions that every person can meet minimal basic needs (social, economic, political, cultural, educational); those of us who have more than we need are morally obligated to share with those who do not have enough; need *structures of justice*, not just individual action
3. Why Migrants are Leaving their Homes-Kay Sovaro (Christ Our Light)
   1. Violence/crime/gangs (especially in cities; often directed at women and children)
   2. Climate change (6+ years of drought to Central America) is destroying agricultural economy in Central America and food shortages (especially corn)
      1. 2010-2015-World Food Program shoes a 500% increase in migration from Central America due to agricultural collapse
   3. Poverty
4. History of Immigration-Melanie Goldberg (Immigration lawyer)
   1. Two groups who come here: non-immigrants (visitors, temp workers, students) and immigrants
   2. Immigrants are sponsored by family members or employers
   3. Long legal residency requirements (sometimes 20-30 years)
   4. 4 ways to come here legally: green card (family based permanent residency card-approval time up to 21 years), asylum (victim of political oppression, approval time between 12 months and 2 ½ years), refugee (forced to flee because of war, famine, persecution, approval time is between 1½ years and 2 years; number of refugees allowed in is declining-down from 85,000 in 2016 to 18,000 this year), visa lottery (millions apply yearly, only 50,000 get in; approval time up to 12 months)
   5. Brief history: we have always struggled to achieve equitable immigration policy; waves of immigration caused by domestic needs (pulls) and international events (pushes); waves of immigration usually lead to anti-immigration measures and discrimination against immigrant groups (ex. Irish, Chinese, Mexicans); 9/11 terrorist attacks fed American xenophobia; in most xenophobic era of in American history
5. History of US Policy in Central America-Dr. Gail Presbey (UD Mercy)
   1. Ancient Mesoamerica has long history of accomplishments (ex. domestication of corn, pyramid making, writing, large cities, astronomy)
   2. Cortez brought sword and Catholicism to the “New World” (some Catholics destroyed Mayan cultural artifacts and history, some preserved)
   3. De Soto colonized areas of Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi-spread Catholicism to Native Americans
   4. Europeans/Americans believed in Manifest Destiny-we are destined (by God) to rule the land from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean; colonization *justified* and *inevitable*
   5. Roosevelt’s Big Stick Diplomacy-took control of Panama Canal and intervened in Central American politics to control area (including taking Puerto Rico)
   6. Multiple US interventions in Central America in 1900s (21 times) to pursue American economic interests, and usually in support of Central American dictators and in violation of civil rights of Central American people
   7. Catholic clergy assassinated in 1980s
   8. People migrate here because:
      1. NAFTA/CAFTA free trade deals put Central American farmers out of business and destroyed the environment
      2. Political unrest that we helped stoke
      3. Coffee rust (tied to climate change)
      4. Desire for family unity, based on earlier immigration policies in US
6. Immigration Numbers-Yanira Arias (Alianza Americas)
   1. Current numbers:
      1. 10.5 million are unauthorized (23%)
      2. 20.7 million are naturalized citizens (45 %)
      3. 2.2 million are temporary lawful (5%)
      4. 12.3 million are lawful permanent residents (27%)
   2. 22.4 million applied for permanent residency in 2017, only 1.1 million granted
   3. TPS-Temporary Protected Status (temporary relief against deportation due to conflict, natural disaster, epidemic, other extraordinary reasons)-TPS designated nations can be taken off list by government
   4. DACA-must be under 31 as of 6/15/2012, must have arrived before 16 years old, must have lived he continuously, no criminal background, satisfy educational requirements; 5000+ DACA recipients in Michigan
   5. Top immigrant nations in Michigan: Mexico, India, China, Canada
   6. Immigrants make up significant part of following industries’ work forces:
      1. Farming, fishing, forestry (36%)
      2. Building and grounds cleaning, maintenance (36%)
      3. Food manufacturing (27%)
      4. Hotel industry (27%)
      5. Construction (24%)
      6. Home healthcare 21%)
   7. Undocumented pay more than $9 billion in payroll taxes annually
   8. Lower incarceration rate than Native born Americans
7. How do we respond-Bridget Theodoroff (Pastoral Associate-Beaumont)
   1. Join a parish Circle of Support or start one
   2. Education-listen to stories of immigrants (Story Corps, presentations), read church documents, articles, legislative bills, educate the parish (have speakers come to church)
   3. Accompaniment-find out what is needed in your community, help members of your parish as needed, comfort parishioners/neighbors, share a meal
   4. Advocacy-pray, write to legislators, meet with local legislators, joins other advocacy groups
8. Wrap Up/Q & A (Panel)
   1. Tuesday, August 25th at 7:00-Presentation on Catholic Social Teaching and Community Prayer with Father Dave Buersmeyer
   2. Question 1: What’s the current situation at the border?
      1. Continue to see push factors forcing people north (focus on bodily safety), increased violation of human rights of women and children; horrible conditions at the southern and northern border of Mexico; COVID has exacerbated the condition at borders
   3. Question 2: How can Circles of Support help what is going on at the border?
      1. Education/conversations are necessary first step, talk to members of Congress, can send electronic communication to people at border (?), donate to organizations working at the border, work with media to tell these stories, vote
   4. Question 3: Are the basic needs of people at the border being met?
      1. Mexican and American governments are not helping, but non-profits are stepping in (food banks, medical care, shelters)
      2. People who leave detention at the border and move up here still need assistance (asylum seekers must wait a year to get work authorization paperwork)