

Immigration Matters Update, June 2017

A special focus on the Vincentian Family Gathering in San Antonio, Texas



2017 Vincentian Family Gathering – Over 200 members of the Vincentian Family (including a large number of young adults!) gathered in San Antonio, Texas from June 9-11 for the 2017 North American Vincentian Family Gathering (VFG) to build community, conversation, and systemic change around the realities of migration in North America. **Goals** were to: deepen relationships and strengthen effective collaboration as a Vincentian Family; increase understanding

of the complexities of the current immigration system; and, discern how we are called to challenge injustice and create positive systemic change around migration. Sisters Kathleen Byrnes and Eileen Judge and Associates LeeAnn Brathwaite and Nizarys Vargas represented the Sisters of Charity of New York. Sister Ann Woodford, SC-Halifax, Administrator of Mt. Saint Vincent Convent, was also present. *Sr. Kathy shared her reflections in the June 29th Le Gras Bulletin.*



Sister Eileen Judge, chair of Immigration Task Force, shares her experience. “**Highlights** were the Voices of Immigrants. Both Yesenia and Yohanes told very moving stories of their experiences. Both are now US citizens but their journeys were long and arduous. I have part of Yesenia's story on video. **Impressions** – I felt empowered to 1) steep myself in the social doctrine of the Church; 2) take action in the form of deeper involvement in the political process; and, 3) be a voice with and for the voiceless. **Insights:** 1) Need for constant and

intense interaction with political and Church leaders at all levels; 2) Continue to collaborate with other groups that share our vision and goals; 3) While our ultimate goal is comprehensive immigration reform, there are interim goals such as humane treatment at every encounter with the system, i.e. at point of entry, at detention centers, during every step of the process. We can advocate by writing to Secretary of Homeland Security, John F. Kelly and others.”

From Sister Ann Woodford, “The weekend was a wonderful experience. It was a bit overwhelming with the scope of people and groups that are part of the Vincentian Family. I appreciated the speakers, they gave me a lot of food for thought. Most of the experiences were from the southwest and not much was said about other parts of the country. With New York City as a sanctuary City, I thought there might be some mention of it.” *Listen to Sister Ann Woodford at <https://schalifax.ca/vincentian-family-gathering-2017/>*



The SCNY Immigration Task Force is already implementing many of the recommendations offered at the VFG. Help the Vincentian Family and ITF to: 1) Raise up the voice and experiences of migrants, immigrants, refugees – help them share their stories; 2) Collaborate with other groups to change policy, law, attitudes; 3) Bring to light what I/we see and experience and engage others in dialogue; 4) Advocate to change not only laws and structures but our attitudes and the climate of the nation ... and for more

judges to hear asylum and other cases; 5) Accompany those in need; 6) Simplify path to citizenship. This past year the Immigration Task Force and Bruce Segall, Coordinator for Immigration Matters, have been active and diligent in deepening relationships, advocating and coordinating efforts with legislators, colleagues and groups such as Justice for Immigrants, NETWORK, the New York Immigration Coalition, New Sanctuary Coalition NYC and others.

Nizarys Vargas, Associate: “This weekend was truly an eye opening experience. Hearing first hand what people are going through just because they are immigrants and not being seen as people was heartbreaking. But being surrounded by a room full of people sharing a common cause gave hope to a better future. As Yohanes said "We are all immigrants on this earth." Therefore, we should be willing to welcome all, including the stranger.”



Celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Charism of Charity Sister Margaret Dennehy participated in a Vincentian Family pilgrimage in France in honor of the 400th Anniversary. In speaking of her experience, Margaret says she was “inspired and challenged ... literally traveling through time with Vincent with a group of 23 from three continents and six languages – a source of daily revelations about our Charism and its roots.” Keep alert to the worldwide mega-project on homelessness that Margaret heard about (to be launched at the Vincentian Family Symposium in Rome, October

12 – 17). The ambitious goal is to enlist all 225+ groups across the world that claim the Vincentian Charism! Jubilee theme “Welcome the Stranger” is the focus of this event.

Carol De Angelo, Director of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation, June 30, 2017