

Discerning How To Welcome Your Neighbor

Each of us wants to be part of a welcoming community, but we often find ourselves at a loss as to where to start. We know the Lord calls on us, but how? What if I don't have the space or the means to provide shelter? What if there are no immigrants in my community? What if those around me are reluctant to learn about immigration?

Addressing these questions requires careful discernment. Instead of listing what you don't have, turn inward and allow God to illuminate your community's strengths. Take a moment to reflect on the Prayer of Saint Ignatius and consider the questions below.

Who is your community?

Tailor your actions to the needs of your community, not the other way around. Take into consideration your congregation, your neighbors and your locality. Who might need help? Who needs to hear the stories of their neighbors? Who is already engaged? Who might be uncomfortable? Are there organizations with which you can partner?

What does your community need?

Are you prepared to ask people directly what they need? Your goal should not be to speak for others or make assumptions, but instead to create a platform and start a dialogue.

What can you offer?

Think about the resources your community already has, but be mindful of your limitations. Resources aren't limited to money or time. You may have more than you realize.

Remember: All efforts, regardless of size, are beneficial and essential when advocating for social justice. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, on your own intelligence do not rely; in all your ways be mindful of Him, and He will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Prayer of Saint Ignatius

Dear God,

Teach me to be generous
To love and serve you as you deserve
To give and not to count the cost
To fight and not to heed the wounds
To toil and not to seek for rest
To labor and to look for no reward
Except that of knowing that
I do your Holy Will.

Amen

Get More Resources

To learn more about how to help immigrants in your community and find free resources about taking action, visit cliniclegal.org/welcome.



CATHOLIC LEGAL
IMMIGRATION
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What can I do?

Once you have discerned who your community is, what they need, and what you're able to offer, consider the action options below. Many of these actions require collaboration. Find a list of CLINIC affiliates at cliniclegal.org/directory.

An important note about safety: Be mindful about not putting immigrants at risk while trying to help. Do not publicly advertise that groups of undocumented immigrants will be at an event or publicly expose the identity of an undocumented person. Exercise extreme caution at all times.

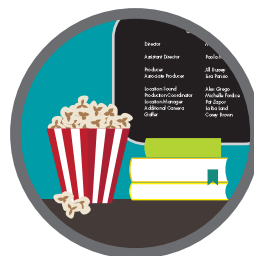
Although offering sanctuary may be most likely to carry consequences, be aware that many of these options may have consequences. An important part of your discernment process may be reflecting on risks and seeking legal counsel as necessary.

For more information and resources, visit cliniclegal.org/welcome.



Support immigrant-owned businesses

Identify and support immigrant-owned businesses locally and beyond. Use immigrant-owned restaurants to cater events.



Increase fellowship

Host a prayer/discussion group, book club, movie night, or other event to create a dialogue on immigration and refugee issues.

Resources: cliniclegal.org/cst/parish



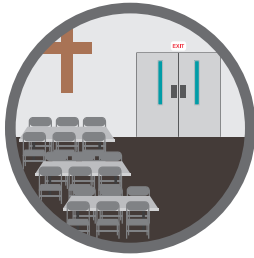
Form partnerships

Collaborate on a project with other local groups. Host a potluck to discuss issues affecting immigrants and refugees. Organize a food/supplies/resources drive to support an immigrant family in need or a church that is providing sanctuary. Furnish the apartment of a newly arrived refugee family. Some of these activities may constitute harboring, seek legal counsel as necessary.



Make a plan

Help immigrants at risk of detention or deportation connect with local legal service providers (find one at cliniclegal.org/directory). Create a referral list of local legal services and consulates. Have it translated.



Offer free space for community education events

Host a workshop or class for people in the area. Examples: Know Your Rights trainings, immigration screenings, family emergency planning for parents who are at risk of deportation, English as a Second Language classes, citizenship test preparation classes.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/resources/know-your-rights



Provide financial support

Fundraise to cover the costs of legal filing fees, to provide micro-loans, or otherwise support vulnerable immigrant and refugee families.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/feeincreases



Speak out

Support immigrants and refugees via social media or write an op-ed or letter to the editor to a local newspaper or magazine. Please be sure to carefully review the note about safety before doing media work.



Engage your leaders

Write a letter to your church leadership, local bishop or state bishops' conference, religious community leadership or the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops supporting their legislative efforts around immigration. Let your conference know how important these issues are!



Advocate for pro-immigrant policies

Hold a phone bank, rally, or respond to a specific piece of legislation affecting immigrants or refugees in your locality, state, or on the federal level.

Resource: cliniclegal.org/state-and-local



Walk with your neighbor

Accompany immigrants to their Immigration and Customs Enforcement or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services appointments.



Offer someone a ride

Provide rides for immigrants who are afraid to drive for fear they may be stopped by police. This activity may have consequences, seek legal counsel as necessary.



Offer sanctuary

Although this is a powerful action and statement, it may carry serious consequences, including fines, criminal prosecution, jail time, etc. Anyone considering this option should consult with an attorney first. You might be agreeing to house, clothe, and feed a person (or family) for an indefinite amount of time. Make sure you have the resources.

How welcoming is your faith community towards immigrants and refugees?

Please complete the survey by choosing yes or no for each question. Each “yes” answer is worth one point. Use the rubric below to review your results.

Do we promote immigration as a benefit to our community?

YES NO

Do we include immigrant integration in our mission statement?

YES NO

Are immigrants represented among our staff and volunteers?

YES NO

Do we offer services in languages other than English?

YES NO

Do we offer ESL, language exchange, or citizenship classes for our immigrant members?

YES NO

Do we foster friendships between newcomers and the receiving community through our programming and public events?

YES NO

Do we connect our immigrant members with local immigration legal services?

YES NO

Do we connect our immigrant members with local social services?

YES NO

Do we ask the immigrant community how they would like us to provide them with additional assistance or support?

YES NO

Do we assist our eligible immigrant members to register to vote?

YES NO

Do we advocate for immigrants within our community at the local and state government levels?

YES NO

Do we support public education events given by local immigration legal and refugee resettlement services with our resources? (Such as volunteers, available facilities, promotional network, etc.)

YES NO

0 points

Poor

You have some work to do, but this list gives you a good idea of where to start.

1-4 points

Fair

You're off to a good start, but there are definite opportunities for more active efforts

5-8 points

Good

You do a great job of actively seeking to integrate new neighbors as members of the community!

9-12 points

Excellent

You work hard at making new immigrants feel welcome. Keep looking for allies and share your strategies!

Want to learn more? Visit cliniclegal.org/welcome.

