MAJOR DOCUMENTS

Leo XIII, “Rerum Novarum” 20, 37, 47 (1891)

“The following duties bind the wealthy owner and the employer: not to look upon their work people are their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character. They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; not to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers – that is truly shameful and inhuman.”

“Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own. Still, when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration.”

“…[N]o one would exchange his country for a foreign land if his own afforded him the means of living a decent and happy life.”


"The migrant Holy Family of Nazareth, fleeing into Egypt, is the archetype of every refugee family. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, living in exile in Egypt to escape the fury of an evil king, are, for all times and all places, the models and protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil."


“[I]f the whole structure and organization of an economic system is such as to compromise human dignity, to lessen a man's sense of responsibility or rob him of opportunity for exercising personal initiative, then such a system, We maintain, is altogether unjust—no matter how much wealth it produces, or how justly and equitably such wealth is distributed.”

“The solidarity of the human race and Christian brotherhood demand the elimination as far as possible of these discrepancies. With this object in view, people all over the world must cooperate actively with one another in all sorts of ways, so as to facilitate the movement of goods, capital and men from one country to another”


"Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and of residence within the confines of his own state. When there are just reasons for it, he must be permitted to emigrate to other countries and to take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a
particular state does not deprive him of membership to the human family, nor of citizenship in that universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men."

"... [O]f its very nature, civil authority exists, not to confine its people within the boundaries of their nation, but rather to protect, above all else, the common good of the entire human family."

"Now among the rights of a human person there must be included that by which a man may enter a political community where he hopes he can more fittingly provide a future for himself and his dependents. Wherefore, as far as the common good rightly understood permits, it is the duty of that state to accept such immigrants and to help to integrate them into itself as new members."

"[T]he public and universal authority, too, must have as its fundamental objective the recognition, respect, safeguarding, and promotion of the rights of the human person."

**Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium Et Spes" 27, 66 (Dec. 7, 1965).**

“In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee,…or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, “As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me” (Matt. 25:40).

"... [W]hen workers come from another country or district and contribute by their labor to the economic advancement of a nation or region, all discrimination with respect to wages and working conditions must be carefully avoided. The local people, moreover, above all the public authorities, should all treat them not as mere tools of production but as persons, and must help them to arrange for their families to live with them and to provide themselves with decent living quarters. The native should also see that these workers are introduced into the social life of the country or region which receives them."

**Paul VI, “Populorum Progressio,” 67, 69 (March 26, 1967)**

“We cannot insist too much on the duty of giving foreigners a hospitable reception. It is a duty imposed by human solidarity and by Christian charity, and it is incumbent upon families and education institutions in the host nations…[T]hey should be welcomed in the spirit of brotherly love”

“Emigrant workers should also be given a warm welcome. Their living conditions are often inhuman, and they must scrimp on their earnings in order to send help to their familias who have remained behind in their native land in poverty.”

**Paul IV, “Octogesima Adveniens” 17 (1971)**

“Right to emigrate: We are thinking of the precarious situation of a great number of emigrant workers whose condition as foreigners makes it all the more difficult for them to make any sort of social vindication, in spite of their real participation in the economic effort of the country that
receives them. It is urgently necessary for people to go beyond a narrowly nationalist attitude in their regard and to give them a charter which will assure them a right to emigrate, favor their integration, facilitate their professional advancement and give them access to decent housing where, if such is the case, their families can join them.

Linked to this category are the people who, to find work, or to escape a disaster or a hostile climate, leave their regions and find themselves without roots among other people.

It is everyone's duty, but especially that of Christians, to work with energy for the establishment of universal brotherhood, the indispensable basis for authentic justice and the condition for enduring peace: "We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly way toward certain men, created to God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: 'He who does not love does not know God' (I Jn. 4, 8)."

Synod of Bishops, “Justicia in Mundo” 21-22 (1971)

“Take, for example, the case of migrants. They are often forced to leave their own country to find work, but frequently find the doors closed in their faces because of discriminatory attitudes, or, if they can enter, they are often obliged to lead an insecure life or are treated in an inhuman manner. The same is true of groups that are less well off on the social ladder such as workers and especially farm workers who play a very great part in the process of development.

To be especially lamented is the condition of so many millions of refugees, and of every group or people suffering persecution--sometimes in institutionalized form--for racial or ethnic origin or on tribal grounds. This persecution on tribal grounds can at times take on the characteristics of genocide.”


“Man has the right to leave his native land for various motives--and also the right to return--in order to seek better conditions of life in another country. This fact is certainly not without difficulties of various kinds. Above all it generally constitutes a loss for the country which is left behind. It is the departure of a person who is also a member of a great community united by history, tradition and culture; and that person must begin life in the midst of another society united by a different culture and very often by a different language. In this case, it is the loss of a subject of work, whose efforts of mind and body could contribute to the common good of his own country, but these efforts, this contribution, are instead offered to another society which in a sense has less right to them than the person's country of origin…

Every possible effort should be made to ensure that it may bring benefit to the emigrant's personal, family and social life, both for the country to which he goes and the country which he leaves. In this area much depends on just legislation, in particular with regard to the rights of workers. It is obvious that the question of just legislation enters into the context of the present considerations, especially from the point of view of these rights…

The most important thing is that the person working away from his native land, whether as a permanent emigrant or as a seasonal worker, should not be placed at a disadvantage in comparison with the other workers in that society in the matter of working rights. Emigration in search for work must in no way become an opportunity for financial or social exploitation.”
Sacred Congregation for Bishops, "Instruction on the Pastoral Care of People Who Migrate" 2, 7 (August 22, 1969)

"Migrations ... give witness to and promote the unity of the human family, and confirm that communion of brotherhood among peoples 'in which each party is at the same time a giver and a receiver.'"

"... [W]here a State which suffers from poverty combined with great population cannot supply such use of goods to its inhabitants, or where the State places conditions which offend human dignity, people possess a right to emigrate, to select a new home in foreign lands, and to seek conditions of life worthy of man. This right pertains not only to individual persons, but to whole families as well .... Public authorities unjustly deny the rights of human persons if they block or impede emigration or immigration, except where grave requirements of the common good, considered objectively, demand it."

Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples, "The Church and Peoples on the Move" (1978)

"Emigrants, on account of the peculiarly universal nature of the Church, are not outsiders."

"The Church, 'sign and instrument of communion with God and unity among men,' (Gaudium et Spes) feels herself to be closely involved in the evolution of civilization of which mobility is a striking feature, and questions herself about the demands made on her presence in this new world, a world which in a certain sense, reflects her own personality as a pilgrim on the face of the earth."

Message of Pope John Paul II for Lent 1990, "Refugees Are Neighbors (September 8, 1989)

"[Refugees must be guaranteed] the right to establish a family or to be reunited with their families; to have a stable, dignified occupation and a just wage; to live in dwellings fit for human beings; to receive adequate education for their children and young people, as well as adequate health care."

Speech of John Paul II to the General Assembly of the International Catholic Migration Commission (July 5, 1990)

"It is necessary to restate that, for migrants or refugees as for all other human beings, rights are not based primarily on juridical membership in a determined community, but, prior to that, on the dignity of the person ...."

"The Catholics who place themselves at the service of migrants and of refugees cannot forget that
they are the disciples of Him who is recognized by the attributes of the Good Samaritan and who himself affirms to us that He identifies himself with the poor and the stranger."

"Everyone must have a conversion of heart and there must be a conversion among communities as well. This conversion will be real when people understand that service to one's brothers and sisters is not merely a secondary 'good deed', but that it is strictly tied to the personal relationship of the Christian with his or her Lord, the Good Sheperd who lays down His life that there may be one flock."


"Joseph's brothers went down into Egypt, driven by a devastating famine (Gn. 42:1-3); the people of Judah, defeated in war, were 'taken into exile out of their land (2 K 25:21); Joseph took Jesus and his mother and fled by night to Egypt because King Herod was searching for the child to destroy him (Mt. 2:13-15); 'That day a bitter persecution started against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone except the apostle fled to the country districts of Judea and Samaris (Ac 8:1."

"In the case of the so-called economic migrants, justice and equity demand that appropriate distinctions be made. Those who flee economic conditions that threaten their lives and physical safety must be treated differently from those who migrate to improve their position."

"The problem of refugees must be confronted at its roots, that is, at the level of the very causes of exile. The first point of reference should not be the interests of the State or national security but the human person, so that the need to live in community, a basic requirement of the very nature of human beings, will be safeguarded."

"Any person in danger who appears at a frontier has a right to protection."

"The exercise of the right to asylum ... should be recognized everywhere and not obstructed with deterrent and punitive measures."

"No person must be sent back to a country where he or she fears discriminatory action or serious life-threatening situations."

"Indifference constitutes a sin of omission. Solidarity helps to reverse the tendency to see the world solely from one's point of view."

"The tragedy of refugees is 'a wound which typifies and reveals the imbalance and conflicts of the modern world.' It shows a divided world that is far from that ideal according to which 'if one member suffers, all suffer together' (1 Cor. 12:26). The Church offers her love and assistance to all refugees without distinction as to religion or race, respecting in each of them the inalienable dignity of the human person created in the image of God (cf. Gn 1:27)."


"The task of proclaiming the word of God, entrusted by Jesus to the Church, has been interwoven with the history of Christian emigration from the very beginning. In the Encyclical Redemtoris missio, I recalled that 'in the early centuries, Christianity spread because Christians, traveling to
or settling in regions where Christ had not yet been proclaimed, bore courageous witness to their faith and founded the first communities there.' This has also happened in recent times...Today the trend in migratory movement has been as it were inverted. It is non-Christians, increasingly numerous, who go to countries with a Christian tradition in search of work and better living conditions, and they frequently do so as illegal immigrants and refugees ... For her part, the Church, like the Good Samaritan, feels it her duty to be close to the illegal immigrant and refugee, contemporary icon of the despoiled traveler, beaten and abandoned on the side of the road to Jericho. (Lk 10:30)."

"This is the Church's missionary path: to go to meet women and men of every race, tongue and nation with friendship and love, sharing their conditions in an evangelical spirit, to break the bread of truth and charity for them.... It is the apostolic style which shines through the missionary experience of the first Christian communities ... [Paul] active in the city of Corinth whose population was largely composed of immigrants working in the port, is urged by the Lord not to be afraid, to continue to 'speak and not to be silent' and to trust in the saving power of the wisdom of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:26-27)."

Other statements for World Migration Day 1995-2006: http://www.cliniclegal.org/AboutUs/files/MessageofHisHolinessBenedictXVI.pdf

U.S. BISHOPS’ STATEMENTS


"The [Catholic] Church [in the United States] extended its pastoral care to every new arriving group and devised innovative responses in the context of the times: educating immigrant children, caring for the orphans, establishing parishes of various languages, teaching seminarians the language of newcomers, forming immigrant associations, offering Christian sympathy and instilling understanding of the duties of citizenship. The pastoral letters of the United States Catholic Bishops and the pastoral practices of dioceses and parishes document a tradition of welcome into the social church where there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all are one in Christ Jesus (Gal 3:28). A Church of many nations, the Catholic community was called to develop an attitude of welcome, mindful of the Lord's words: 'He who welcomes you welcomes me.' (Mt. 10:40). It was challenged to reach out to the poor and the marginal and open ways to full participation, because when a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong ... he shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself (Lv 19:33-34).' "

"The task of welcoming immigrants, refugees and displaced person into full participation in the Church and society with equal rights and duties continues the biblical understanding of the justice of God reaching out to all peoples and rectifying the situation of the poor, the orphans, the widows, the disadvantaged, and especially in the Old Testament, the alien and the stranger."

"The biblical injunction to extend hospitality to the stranger overcomes the tendency to see newcomers as a threat to our comfort, institutions, culture and lifestyles."
"The plight of the undocumented assumes a particular urgency. It is against the common good and unacceptable to have a double society, one visible with rights and one invisible without rights - a voiceless underground of undocumented persons. For political and economic reasons, these persons have settled into the country and are now part of its life. While the government has a right to safeguard the common good by controlling immigration, an effort should be pursued to regularize as many undocumented immigrants as possible."

"The commitment to welcome is a call to dispel attitudes, stereotypes and prejudices which are harmful to others and which make us inhospitable."


"The New Testament shifts from identifying with strangers based on a common experience to serving strangers because in each face we see Christ."

OTHER STATEMENTS OF NOTE


"Immigration is a 'sign of our times, the tip of the iceberg, the red light of alarm that reveals violations of human and civil rights, distorted and exploitative economic relations, personal and national tragedies."


"In the advancement of universal human rights, the two services the church offers the world -- the defense of the dignity of the person and the building of the unity of the human family -- converge. 'Promoting the rights of all persons, irrespective of nationality,' the Council declared, 'is accordingly of the essence of the church's mission in the world.'"

Sermon of His Eminence Roger Cardinal Mahony, "You Have Entertained Angels Without Knowing It!" (October 9, 1993)

"The rights of immigrants are a theme of extraordinary importance in Catholic social teaching and follow from the basic principles of this teaching which affirm life and human dignity. The right of persons to enjoy and share in the benefits of the earth is an integral part of that teaching. The right to move across borders to escape political persecution or in search of economic survival is explicitly part of that tradition.... Catholic social teaching takes what many view to be a countercultural position on this matter and insists that the right to immigrate is more fundamental than that of nations to control their borders."
"The command to love the stranger is a consistent theme throughout Scripture and occurs nearly three dozen times in the first five books of the Bible. In the Hebrew Scriptures, it is surpassed in its frequency only by the command to adore, love and revere God and God alone."


"Human beings, having one heavenly Father (Mt. 23:9), share the same origin and destiny; this common link grounds the kinship among all peoples. For this reason, love of God and neighbor is the first and greatest commandment."

"The centrality and dignity of all human beings in the ordered hierarchy of nature arise because 'each person not only reflects God, but is the expression of God's creative work and the meaning of Christ's redemptive ministry' .... the dignity possessed by every person 'comes from God [and] not from any human quality or accomplishment.'"

"Newcomers should not be welcomed primarily because of the benefits they bring or provide .... The Church's view ... anchors itself in realities that transcend nationality, ethnic background, and cost-benefit analysis; we have all been created in the image and likeness of God, we are all primarily social by nature, and the goods of the earth have been made for all to enjoy."


"The Catholic commitment to the unity of humankind does not derive from devotion to an abstract universalism, nor is it simply an expression of the social structure of the church as a global institution. Rather, with the Jewish tradition, it shares in a very real way the memories of exile in Egypt and in Babylon."

"Just as with biblical Judaism justice and kindness to the stranger and alien was a fundamental duty of the Covenant, so too with the Christian community true religion consists in care for widows and strangers. For example, the paradigm of Christian charity, in a challenge to every form of chauvinism and xenophobia, is the Good Samaritan who at great risk and cost to himself overcomes ethnic and religious hostility to care for a Jew fallen among thieves (Lk 10:29-37) ... the life of Jesus itself begins with the flight into Egypt and the Holy Family's exile there as political refugees until the death of Herod (Mt. 2:13-23). With the flight into Egypt, the status of refugee was confirmed in a most solemn way as part of the human condition. Subsequently, Christians have understood their condition as peregrini, pilgrims, of homines viatores, homeless wayfarers, without permanent homes."

"[T]he self-understanding of the Church as a 'sacrament--that is, a sign and an instrument--of communion with God and of the Unity of all men' entails defense of human dignity of all who are oppressed."

"Indeed, according to Vatican Council II, the service of unity across social, political and cultural divisions is one of two ways in which the Church serves the world. The other is related--namely the defense of human rights (Gaudium Et Spes, No. 41-43). In concern for migrants and refugees, the service of unity and the defense of human rights comes together."
"... Pacem in Terris, the charter of contemporary Catholic political theology, in affirming that the end of all political authority is the common good, understood as the promotion, defense and safeguarding of human rights, affirms that when governments fail to ensure the human rights of their people, it falls to other authorities to take on that role."


"At the outset of the patriarchal narrative Yahweh tells Abraham, 'Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you' (Gn. 12:1). And the descendants of Abraham continued to move from place to place sometimes as a result of economic forces, familial disputes, war, or religious obedience. No lesson drawn from these experiences looms larger than the command, 'You shall not oppress an alien; you well know how it feels to be an alien, since you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt' (Ex 23:9). The experience of being in a land not one's own was to be indelibly impressed upon the imagination of the pious Jew. Each generation had to learn the lesson, 'When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt (Lv. 19:33).' The experience of being an alien was never to be forgotten; but the lesson to be learned was not that one should never forgive the Egyptian, nor never permit the experience to occur again. Rather, the lesson was never to do to another what the Jewish people had themselves suffered."

"The entire pastoral agenda of the Church changed to accommodate the new immigrants and their descendants. For today's American Catholics to have forgotten that history is akin to the prophets' claim about Israel's historical amnesia regarding the exodus or exile."