

Appendix B

Welcoming the Stranger: Unity in Diversity (USCCB)

A PARISH GROUP STUDY on MULTI-CULTURAL INCLUSION

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a statement in November 2000 entitled Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity. This document stresses the desire of the U.S. Bishops to welcome the poor, and all diverse peoples in our midst, especially immigrants and refugees who come to our shores. In previous periods of our history immigrants established ethnic parishes to meet their needs, i.e. Italian, Polish, Irish parishes, etc. Today, however, immigrants and refugees attempt to follow their spirituality and customs in the parishes in the neighborhood of their residence. These immigrants come from Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and Pacific Islands, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia to name a few.

The immigrants and refugees come to our shores for many of the same reasons past immigrants did no matter how recent or how many generations ago. The threats of starvation, political persecution and religious persecution which exist around the world move people to flee their homelands to find a better way. The tradition of the U.S. has been to offer a safe haven from persecution, to welcome the immigrants and refugees to safety, freedom, and prosperity. The Bishops have continually upheld the right of oppressed and desperate people to migrate.

In the pursuit of that dream, we, the Catholic Church through the Catholic parish communities must offer welcome and support for the immigrants and other cultures. It is a scriptural mandate, our Catholic tradition; it is how we follow the way of Christ.

In an effort to assist the U.S. Bishops with their recognized challenge as found in Welcoming the Stranger Among US: Unity in Diversity Appendix B is a three cycle process of small or large group discussion to bring us to the ultimate goal of communion and solidarity. This resource can be used in parishes in a variety of ways. Parish leaders, pastoral council, ministry teams, parish staffs and small Christian communities would find these materials most helpful in building unity within the parish and assessing the diverse cultures that are present in the parish and in the community.

Data from the Census regarding ethnic populations throughout the diocese can be obtained by accessing this website: www.dioceseofjoliet.org/ohm/. Also, please consider “people on the move” who often are strangers visiting in parishes: college students; traveling sports teams; entertainment groups such as stockcar racers, concerts, sporting events, etc. How can we respond to these needs?

Whether used in a large or smaller group, optimum discussion occurs when the gathered group is divided into smaller circles of five to eight persons. Smaller groupings aid in limiting the time that is spent on each session and enables all to participate easily. Ideally for each smaller group, a facilitator would be designated to keep to the time limitations and ensure that the discussion stays focused on the material to be covered. The designated facilitator would receive the necessary materials from the parish convener to assist in the discussion.

The cycles are: Cycle 1 - 2003 The Calling (Immigrants Yesterday and Today)
Cycle 2 2004 Conversion
Cycle 3 2005 Communion and Solidarity

Welcoming the Stranger: Unity in *Diversity* (USCCB)

A PARISH GROUP STUDY on MULTI-CULTURAL INCLUSION

CYCLE 1: We are Called to Welcome the Stranger

SESSION 1 – Our Own Ethnic Origins Immigrants Yesterday and Today

Prayer: Reflect on the following 2 readings

“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)

“Our first task in approaching another people, another culture, another religion, is to take off our shoes for the place is holy. Else we may find ourselves treading on people’s dreams. More serious still, we may forget that God was there before our arrival.” The Primal Vision, John V. Taylor

It is said that we Christians are on a journey – that we are pilgrims journeying to another land, another time, another place. So in that way we are all migrants on the move from here to somewhere. We have all been somewhere else, or our ancestors have, and we are identified by our relationship with that place and our ancestors. There are stories that tell of that pilgrimage; the how, the why, the when of that journey.

As we read in Exodus, we know to some degree how it feels to be an alien, a foreigner in a new land, in a new church, in a new community.

Name your ethnicity. What do you know of your family’s journey to the United States? What do you know of your family’s homeland? Why did your family migrate? What conditions in their homeland motivated them to migrate? What conditions did they experience in this country? What was the effect of the existing social, political and economic systems on them in their first years adjusting to a new land? What lessons does this family history impart to me today in relation to the new immigrants seeking a place in the U.S.?

Closing Prayer:

“Always be wanting peace with all people, and the holiness without which no one can ever see the Lord. Be careful that no one is deprived of the grace of God and that no root of bitterness should begin to grow and make trouble; this can poison a whole community.” (Heb 12: 14-16)

Meditate on the words of the song: **“Somos el Cuerpo de Cristo** – (Jaime Cortez)

Resources: For multi-cultural communication ground rules, see Eric H.F. Law, ***The Bush was Blazing but was not Consumed*** (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1996), p 86. In the same book see P. 87 for Respectful communication guidelines, and P. 137 for Diagram 1 – *conocimientos* chart.

CYCLE 1: We are Called to Welcome the Stranger

SESSION 2 – The Immigrant Experience

Prayer: Reflect on and share your thoughts on the following Scriptural quotes:

“You and the alien who resides with you shall have the same law and the same ordinance.”

(Num 15:16)

“there shall be one law for the native and for the alien who resides among you.”

(Ex 12:49)

“You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice;” (Deut 24:17)

“You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien” (Ex 22:21)

Few Americans have not encountered recent immigrants to this country in their neighborhoods and workplaces. Long Beach CA is home to more Cambodians than Phnom Penh. Los Angeles ranks just behind Mexico City and Guadalajara in the number of Mexican origin. Chicago has more of Polish extraction than Warsaw. Small towns and villages have seen a rapid rise in immigrant population. Yet almost without exception there is an extreme shortage of equality and justice extended to immigrants, especially those who are first generation. With lack of support and assistance, the way the immigrants are being treated has declined to mere tolerance, and in some cases, to exploitation.

“We often feel isolated, marginalized. We do not necessarily expect the Church to know our language, culture, or history, but we do want to be acknowledged, respected, and valued.”

“We experience the Mass in the United States as fast and cold”

(Quotes from newly arrived Haitian parishioners in Wash. DC)

The lack of welcoming at the federal government level is reflected in harsh immigration rules that frequently leads to separation of families and hardships. (www.icirr.org/.htm)

What is similar and different in my immigration history compared to new immigration today?

What is the attitude of our Church towards immigrants? Other cultures in the neighborhood?

What impression does our parish give of openness to other cultures in our liturgies, events, activities?

What are your feelings and thoughts about current restrictions, laws, etc. regarding immigrants? See:

(<http://www.icirr.org/icirr.htm>)

(<http://www.dioceseofjoliot.org/ohm/immigrationIssues.htm>)

In what ways do we support equality of opportunity, economic support, health and wealth to all immigrants?

Closing Prayer: Sing and/or reflect on the words of **“All Are Welcome”**. (Text: Marty Haugen, 1950)

Tune: TWO OAKS, 868687 WITH REFRAIN: Marty Haugen, 1950, IGA Publications, Inc.)

Discuss the practice of our parish in light of these words.

Pray the Our Father in as many languages as possible

CYCLE 1: We are Called to Welcome the Stranger

SESSION 3 – We Are The Church

“But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.” (Ex 20:10)

“on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.” (Ex 23:12)

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me,’ (Matt 25:32-36)

Many of the quotes for this cycle are taken from Exodus due to the fact that the migration story of the Jewish people was told in the early books of the Bible. The final quote here, however, is taken from Matthew and is rather significant since it is the final judgment quote. To those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, and see strangers, welcoming them, God will give the inheritance promised, because they fulfill the second greatest commandments of Jesus: to love God and our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Who are the “strangers” in our parish? In our parish neighborhood?

(http://www.dioceseofolivet.org/ohm/downloads/2000_Census.pdf)

What is the ethnic population of our parish?

Does it correspond to the ethnic makeup of our neighborhood?

Why? Or Why not?

Who is NOT here?

What can we do specifically in our parish to extend a welcome to those of diverse cultures in our neighborhood?

“As people without a homeland, refugees seek a welcome in other countries of the world, which is our common home. They have rights.. to all which nourishes and sustains them as human beings.” (Pope John Paul II, 1990 Lenten Message)

Closing Prayer:

Open our eyes Lord, to recognize the stranger among us.

Open our ears Lord, to hear their cry.

Open our hearts Lord, to welcome them as brothers and sisters on the journey

Back to our Father.