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Washington Catholic bishops urge comprehensive immigration reform

*Parishes across the state to raise awareness, urge congressional action
the weekend of Sept. 7-8*

The Catholic bishops of Washington state today released a pastoral statement urging Congress and all citizens to work to end the human suffering associated with the nation's immigration laws. The bishops said human dignity must be the starting point for comprehensive immigration reform.

The bishops acknowledged the sovereign right of nations to secure their borders and expressed concern that immigration reform must protect American workers. However, the human costs of the current system cannot be ignored, they said.

The Catholic Church sees first-hand how current immigration laws result in unequal enforcement of laws, the break-up of families and the exploitation of laborers, they said. In addition, immigrants are frequently victims of abuse at the hands of smugglers and thousands have died in pursuit of work because of a deficient system.

“It is out of respect for human dignity, a value at the heart of our discipleship in Christ, but also in keeping with the unique soul and character of America, that we urge elected officials and all citizens to work to end this totally preventable human suffering,” the bishops said in their statement, which was sent to all Catholic parishes in Washington state this week for publication in bulletins at weekend Masses Sept. 7-8.

“We join our brother bishops in the United States in urging continued bi-partisan cooperation for comprehensive immigration reform,” the statement said, outlining principles the bishops believe should guide congressional reform of current law.

“We are convinced that the overall benefits of legislation being proposed outweigh the burdens of our current system, which relegates millions to life in the shadows and subjects them to family separation, detention, and exploitation,” the bishops said in their statement.

The Catholic Bishops of Washington State are: Archbishop J. Peter Sartain of the Archdiocese of Seattle; Bishop Blase J. Cupich of the Diocese of Spokane; Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of the Diocese of Yakima; and Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

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