

❖ Other Voices ❖

The émigré 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.

POPE PIUS XII (1876-1958), *EXSUL FAMILIA* (1952)

In the Old Testament several different terms refer to strangers or foreigners. The Hebrew words *zar* and *nokri*, translated as “stranger” and “foreign,” refer to persons who are not a part of Israel.... *Ger*, on the other hand, is translated “sojourner,” “stranger,” or “alien,” and points to someone who comes from outside the community but who settles within the community....

The *ger* is very much like what we today call “resident alien.” He or she may be a refugee or an immigrant, settling into the community but still as an outsider who brings a different communal identity. Within the covenant community, however, this difference does not justify a double standard of justice.

DANA W. WILBANKS, *RE-CREATING AMERICA: THE ETHICS OF U.S. IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE POLICY IN A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE* (1996)

When people in need are in a strange country, where they do not understand the language and much less know its culture and legislation, they are in a very vulnerable position.... They are therefore often victims of violence, maybe not always physical, but very often psychological and moral, as in cases of marginalization and exclusion, discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. They are often made “scapegoats” for local unemployment or criminal activities.

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *PEOPLE ON THE MOVE* (2005)

For Christians, the claims and interests of nations should always be evaluated by reference to the God whose love and justice is the center of astonishingly inclusive relatedness.

The second part of a Christian’s perspective is that human particularities are valued.... We are culture-creating and culture-bearing peoples. We

develop a sense of who we are by being related to particular communities, whose identity we come to share....

In biblical traditions there is recognition of both the unity of the human family in God and the diversity of the peoples of the earth. Both are contained in Paul's sermon in Athens, a text that historically has often been cited in support of immigration: "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live" (Acts 17:26). God is the creator of all human beings through their common ancestor Adam. Indeed, all of us are relatives. Yet nations with their boundaries also reflect God's ordering activity.

DANA W. WILBANKS, *RE-CREATING AMERICA* (1996)

Establishing true partnerships with aliens means recognizing and respecting their identity and their capacity. It means helping them to help themselves whenever possible, often by assisting them with the formation of organizations of their own where they can better identify their priorities and find solutions. In other words, it means allowing the uprooted to develop fully, wherever they are, as individuals and as communities.

The individual and collective responsibility of Christians toward aliens is to take measures to enable them again to be *subjects and not objects* of history. By welcoming strangers, which implies considering them as partners, and by taking action in the public arena, the church makes its struggle for justice, God's will for all, more authentic and credible.

ANDRÉ JACQUES, *THE STRANGER WITHIN YOUR GATES* (1985)

A large number of immigrants, many from Mexico and other South American countries (and to a lesser extent from Asia), are making the United States more communitarian than it has been in recent decades by fostering a stronger commitment to family, community, and nation, as well as respect for authority and moderate religious-moral values.... [They are] changing a country often depicted as divided along immutable racial lines between whites and blacks...to an increasingly varied society in which more fluid ethnic groups will play a greater role and in which victimhood will play an ever smaller role. Their high intermarriage rates serve as but one example of this positive modification, for through intermarriage Hispanic and Asian immigrants help insure that the most intimate ties — those of family — will prevent American society from breaking down along ethnic lines.

I do not claim that all of the effects of recent (or previous) immigrants have been salutary. However, most of the troubling effects are temporary and limited, and they pale in comparison with the constructive ones. American society is light-years ahead of most other societies, which have yet to learn how to incorporate large numbers of immigrants without losing their own core values or abusing the immigrants.

AMITAI ETZIONI, "HISPANIC AND ASIAN IMMIGRANTS: AMERICA'S LAST HOPE" (2007)