



## Good Shepherd Position on Migration

GS Direction, stated at the 29<sup>th</sup> Congregational Chapter, July 2009, excerpt

*We commit ourselves... to respond to the anguish of the world calling us to the margins... by taking courageous steps to use our international resources effectively, to network and to... Work zealously with women and children, especially those...who are... forced to migrate*

### GS position on Migration



In a globalized world, people cross borders, temporarily or permanently, for many reasons. Where populations are mired in conditions of poverty, where environmental conditions are not sustainable, or where conflict immerses civilian population in constant violence or virtual dictatorship, people move for both freedom and survival, seeking better social and economic opportunities. A migrant is one engaged in activity for payment in a State of which he or she is not a national. Movement across borders

is a perilous journey for those who must separate from families, who cannot acquire legal documents, have documents taken from them, cannot communicate in a new language, or lack education and employment skills. Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons are often categorized or labeled, making the regularization of their situation bureaucratically impossible. Their situation leaves them vulnerable to being exploited by traffickers and smugglers, even by legally recognized recruiters. Women are increasingly among the vulnerable populations of people migrating. Where the male head of household migrates, the women and children left behind are often bereft of any protection or income.

GS is part of a Judea-Christian tradition whose spiritual covenant rests on a commitment to “welcome the stranger.” The Social Teaching of our church has a rich heritage of welcome and concern for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. We embrace this tradition and support Human Rights for all immigrants, migrants, and refugees.

There exist barriers to the free movements of peoples that contradict human rights. There is an apprehension of “mass migration” resulting in many restrictive laws. The right of the free movement of the human person has been subordinated to national sovereignty and the dominant rights of the movement of goods and money in this globalized era. While conventions and treaties exist, implementation lags to the disadvantage of those who are most vulnerable in their home society, desperate to seek personal and family security.

GS’s first response to migrants and refugees is to welcome them as one would welcome the Divine among us. We honor the culture and heritage they bring, help them in resettlement or regularization, and celebrate the positive contributions migrants make to the economic, social and cultural lives of a new locality.

The service needs of migrants are complex and extensive – from language skills to health care to social supports, to healing from trauma, to need for employment skills to legal help. We seek to

listen to their experiences, accompany them, and develop programs to serve their multiple and varied needs.

We continually update migration issues – patterns, legal requirements, and status so as to advocate for change in systems and structures. We work so that the most vulnerable migrant will receive protection, welcome, and opportunity that every human person ought to be accorded.

**In responding fully to our GS Congregational Direction about Migration, it is critical to:**

Develop service projects and participate in networks that extend social services, offer citizenship classes, secure improved housing, attend to decent wages, supply medical attention, and have educational opportunities for immigrants, migrants, and refugees. Attention is given to the families of migrants and refugees, with efforts to sustain relationships.

Give support to organizations of migrants that speak on their own behalf and define and advocate for the best solutions and policies.

Advocate, nationally and internationally, for policies that respect the human rights of immigrants and preserve the unity of the immigrant family, including due process rights, fair naturalization procedures, and legalization opportunities. We advocate for generous refugee policies that provide protection for those fleeing oppression and discrimination.

Oppose efforts to restrict migration while failing to address root causes and the continuation of political, social, and economic inequities that contribute to the desperate movement of peoples. Advocacy for sustainable local economies, against the neo-liberal economic project is a vital aspect of this.

Advocate for economic and legal protection of migrants while they are working in host country labor markets, including standards on wages and working condition. This requires policy cooperation and economic justice between the sending country and host country.

Know and support the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to status of refugees (and its protocols.) Support full ratification of the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families as well as ILO C-97 and ILO C-143. Including migrant issues of women in national CEDAW reports is an effective way to advocate.



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