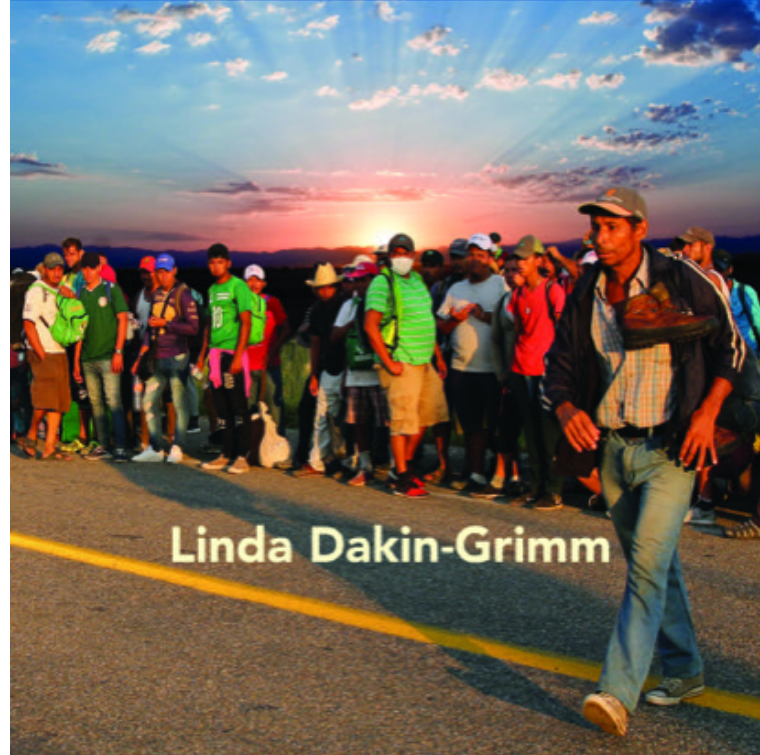


# Dignity & **JUSTICE**

Welcoming the Stranger at Our Border



Linda Dakin-Grimm

The Old Testament is clear and consistent about the command to welcome the suffering migrant

“The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Lev. 19:33–34)

To those who don't welcome the stranger,  
Jesus will say (Matt. 25: 3-46):

- I was a stranger and you did not welcome me. . . .
- 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

# John Paul II's teaching is that for Catholics

there are certain things that are ***are always wrong to choose,***” because choosing them ***involves a “moral evil.”*** John Paul II taught that the Catholic ***may never choose a moral evil, even if there is a good intention, or the belief that some other good will ultimately come of it.***

# Pope Leo XIII (in the late 1800s)

*(Sapientiae Christianae)*

**It is a high crime indeed to withdraw allegiance from God in order to please men, an act of consummate wickedness to break the laws of Jesus Christ, in order to yield obedience to earthly rulers, or under pretext of keeping the civil law, to ignore the rights of the Church; “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) (§7)**

# Pope Pius XII's 1952 Apostolic Constitution, Exsul Familia Nazarethana

- The Holy Family is:
  - . . . 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.
- We must welcome both those afraid of persecution and those who migrate out of extreme need – because they could not sustain themselves in their home countries.

The Church teaches that just like  
the right to life,

***“the right of people to migrate is found in the natural law,”*** because “it is inevitable, given the nature of the earth, which is vast and includes both habitable and uninhabitable places that some families will migrate.” ***“There are people who have been forced, by such things as war, unemployment and hunger, to leave their homes and live in foreign lands,”*** and ***“the natural law itself, no less than devotion to humanity, urges that ways of migration be opened to these people.”***

The Church's position is not that “law and order” trumps everything else

. . . the sovereignty of the State, although it must be respected, ***cannot be exaggerated to the point that access to this land is, for inadequate or unjustified reasons, denied to needy and decent people from other lands,*** provided of course, that the public wealth, considered very carefully, does not forbid this.



# Pope St. John Paul II taught [Centesimus Annus]

- the “transcendent human dignity” of every human person must be protected *in every situation* (§5), that *every person* has a “grave obligation” to “ensure the *preservation of life*,” and that “every individual has a *natural right* to procure what is required to live” (§8).
- When there is a question of defending the rights of individuals, **the defenseless and the poor have a claim to special consideration**. The richer class has many ways of shielding itself, and stands less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own. . . (§10).
- “extend progressively **to all mankind**, since no one can consider himself extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family. No one can say he is not responsible for the well-being of his brother or sister” (§51).

# John Paul II Veritatis Splendor

***Whatever is hostile to life itself***, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; ***whatever violates the integrity of the human person***, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit, ***whatever is offensive to human dignity***, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, ***deportation***, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat laborers as mere instruments of profit, and not as free responsible persons; all these and the like are a disgrace. . . (§80) (emphasis added).

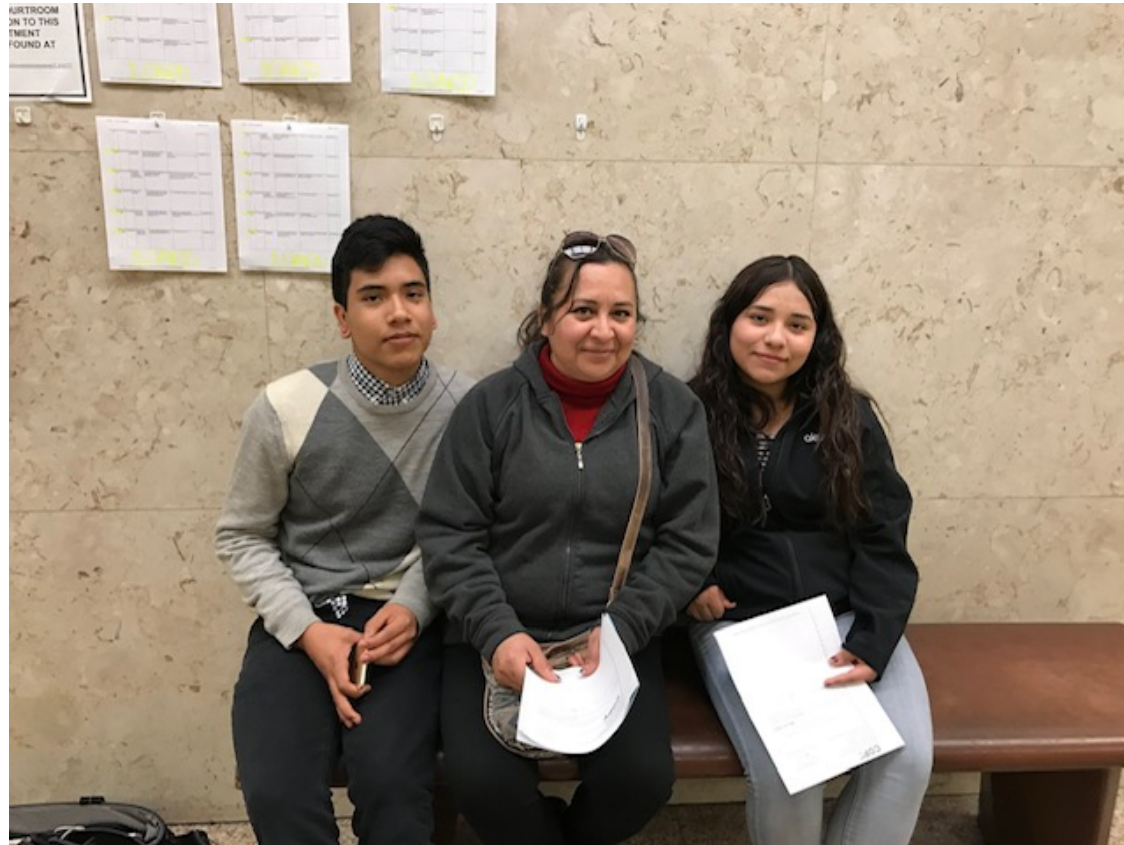
# Javi and Gabriela



# Greeting migrants at our border



# Javi and Gabriela



# Javi joined a recreational soccer team



# Javi with some mentors



# Javi goes to the dentist at St. John's Well Child and Family Center





# KIND found a pro bono lawyer for Gabriela



The roads to legal status in this country are few and exceptionally narrow

- U.S. law is not full of loopholes. It is actually full of land-mines – ways that migrants can unwittingly fall off track.
- Remedy? It is called “Special Immigrant Juvenile Status” or “SIJS.”

# Process to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status

- File a lawsuit in the California state court system, asking a family court judge to order them into the legal and physical custody of their mother, and then ask the judge to make three factual findings about them:
  - (1) that they were “abandoned, abused, or neglected” by a parent in their home country;
  - (2) that reunification with that parent is not viable; and
  - (3) that it is not in the children’s “best interest” to be returned to their home country
- Then apply to USCIS for SIJS

# Volunteer from Resurrection Parish, Martha DeLira with Gabriela



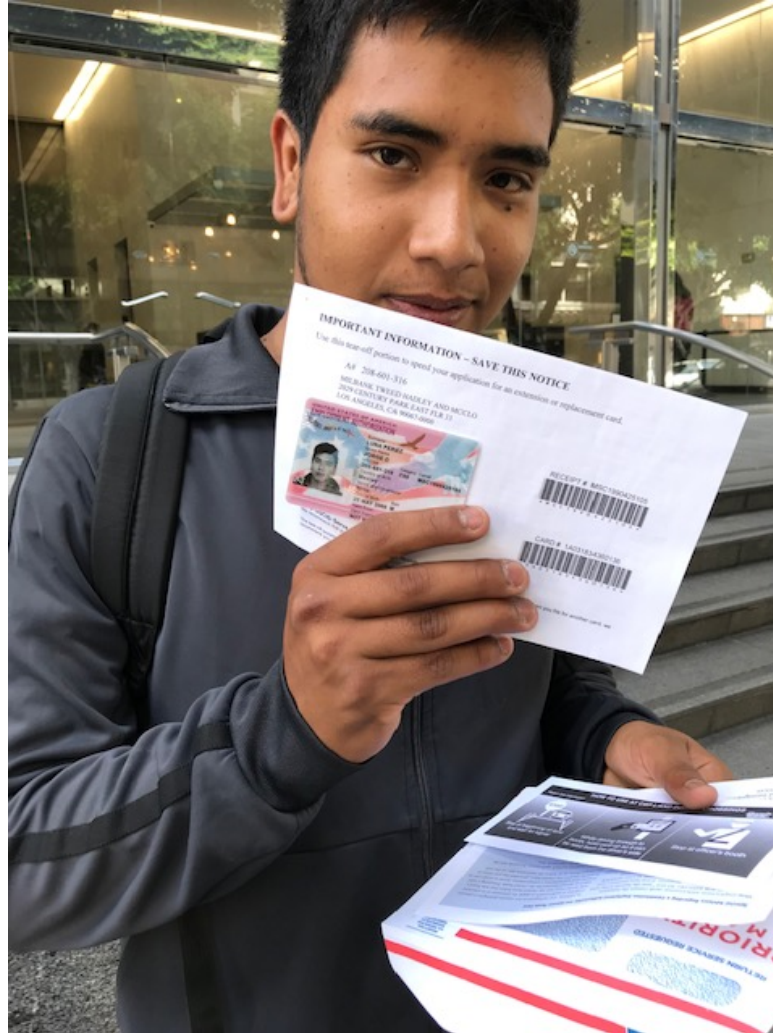
# Gabriela and Javi's state court case

- Petitioned the L.A. Superior Court to waive the hundreds of dollars of court fees
- Applied to have a guardian *ad litem*
- Petitioned the court to recognize Ana as their mother and to award her physical and legal custody. (Accomplishing “service” of documents in a foreign country and obtaining consent from an abusive parent are often serious challenges in SIJS cases.)
- Petitioned the family court judge to review the evidence they presented and to make the factual findings that both children had been “abandoned, abused, or neglected” by their father, that reunification with him was not viable, and that it was not in their best interest to be returned to Mexico

Attorney General Jeff Sessions is against the SIJS law  
portrays SIJS applicants as  
gang members and “wolves in sheep’s clothing”



# Javi with work permit



# What should Catholics have in mind when the issue of immigration reform comes up?

- We need to have a basic grasp of what law and policies exist now, before you engage in discussion of what should be
- We need to know about what exists now



# What exists now

Under current law, it is exceedingly difficult for anyone to gain permission to migrate to live and work long-term in the United States as a permanent resident. There are only four roads:

- 1) **Family-based migration** (limited to 480,000 people per year)
- 2) **Employment-based migration** (limited to 140,000 persons per year)
- 3) The **diversity lottery** (50,000 persons per year)
- 4) **Humanitarian relief** (which includes both asylum and SIJS, granted in very few cases)

# What exists now

- The United States simply does not allow most of the suffering people in the world—even those trying to save their lives—to enter, reside, and work lawfully in the country.
- Defenses to being deported for people who are caught in the United States without permission exist for only a few, very narrow categories of people who experienced child abuse, sexual abuse, trafficking, or were victims of serious crimes in the United States, perpetrated by U.S. citizens.
- U.S. immigration law, like tax law, is complex, and its administration is de-centralized across the federal government. The process favors affluent people who can pay lawyers to navigate for them.

# How should Catholics respond

There is no single “Catholic” response to all migration situations. The faith requires no particular position on people who are living safely, with their families, with adequate resources in their home countries.

# How should Catholics respond

**The Common Good** – Catholics must always keep in mind that human laws must be for the common good. But in Catholic thought, “common good” doesn't mean “greatest good for the greatest number.” That is utilitarianism – Jeremy Bentham's idea from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. In Catholic thinking, ***every single person counts*** in the common good. Catholics recognize that every human has a God-given need to live in society with other people. We must seek laws that enable ***all people in the world*** to live safely, and to find God. ***The Catholic common good is not limited to people on one side of the border.***

# How should Catholics respond

**Life Issues** – Where no “life” issues are implicated, Catholics, educated in our laws and system, may reasonably arrive at different conclusions. However, when people come to the country in fear for their lives, or are unable to survive in their home countries *for any reason, a life issue is presented.*

# How should Catholics respond

In the words of Pope St. John Paul II, Catholics of any political stripe may only support immigration reform that eliminates:

“whatever is hostile to life itself...whatever violates the integrity of the human person...whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, **deportation**, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children” (***Veritatis Splendor***, no. 80).

# How should Catholics respond

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) teaches American Catholics to follow the gospel mandate to “welcome the stranger,” which quite specifically means always to:

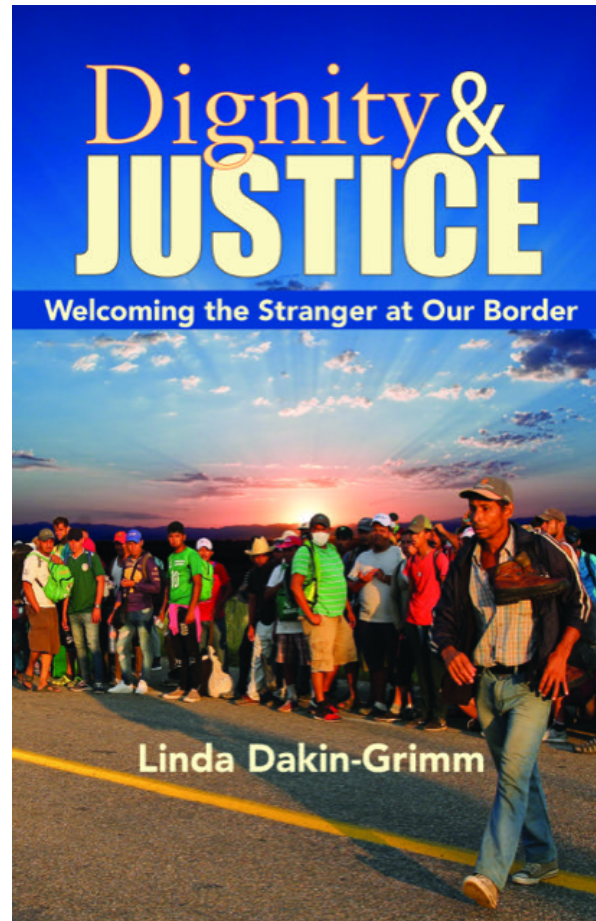
“care for and stand with newcomers [both] authorized and unauthorized.”

***U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States with Introductory Note*** (Nov. 2015), no. 81. [www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org).

Life issues are life issues. Catholics do not oppose abortion and ignore suffering migrants.



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# Things to consider

- Had you heard the Church's teaching on migration before? Are you surprised? How do you respond?
- What does St. Pope John Paul II's teaching that we may never "cooperate with evil, even in the hope that some other good may come" mean for Catholics today?
- How should we as Catholics respond to Gilberto, Gabriela, Javi and the thousands of children like them?
- Can you identify one specific thing you will do to welcome the stranger? (In the spectrum from prayer to talking to others to walking with immigrants)