

Dignity & **JUSTICE**

Welcoming the Stranger at Our Border

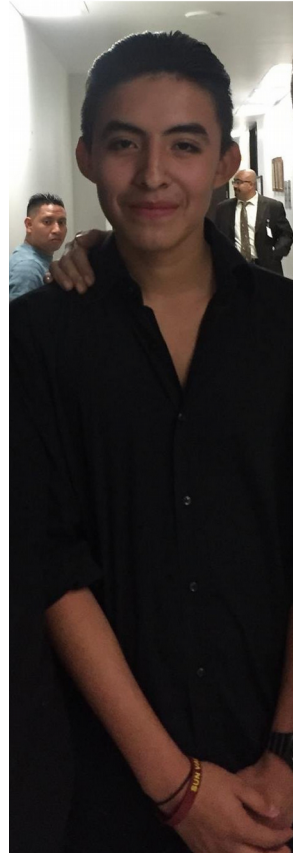


Linda Dakin-Grimm

Questions for you to consider as we talk this evening

- What is a human being? Do I believe that every human is a precious child of God, created in God's image and likeness?
- Is an unborn human more worthy of love and compassion than a born child? What about a child born in another country? Is someone born in this country more worthy than a person born elsewhere?
- As a human person, do I have obligations or duties to my fellow human beings? Do they extend to all humans, or just to some?
- Does my faith impose on me any particular obligations to my fellow humans? To all or just to some? Are they limited to my family? My country?
- Are my obligations to others limited by the “accident” of where I was born? Must I care only for people in my city? My country?
- Do my Christian obligations end at the border?

This is Gilberto



Gilberto is proud that he was baptized



Gilberto's troop performed Christian skits and versions of folk tales



MS-13 is one of two dominant gangs that terrorize ordinary people



Main Federal Agencies involved in Immigration

- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- U.S. Department of Justice and its Executive Office of Immigration Review (“immigration court”)
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and its Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
- U.S. Department of State

Asylum is available only to people who can prove they experienced:

- Past serious persecution in their homeland (or have a credible fear of future persecution)
- But then only if they could prove the particular persecution they suffered was “on account of” one of five specific grounds: their race, religion, national origin, political opinion, or membership in a “particular social group”

Gilberto also had to prove

His own country, Guatemala, couldn't or wouldn't protect him, and that he couldn't just move to some other place in Guatemala to be safe

Only specific kinds of persecution count for asylum

People who suffer for reasons other than persecution, like famine, natural disaster, severe poverty, war, or lack of medical care—things that arguably don't involve persecution – never qualify for asylum, no matter how severe the suffering

Today Gilberto is a tall, slim, confident 20-year-old



Gilberto graduated from high school in June, 2019



The Catholic Response

When it comes to **children and migrants whose lives are in danger or who simply cannot support themselves in the places they come from** – the Catholic response – a **“life” issue** – is clear. From Pope Leo XIII in the 19th century, Popes Pius XII and John Paul II in the 20th Century, and Popes Benedict XI and Francis in this century, our Church has taught that Catholics **must welcome and support these migrants, even if our country's secular law would turn them away**

Adam and Eve expelled from the garden



From Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy

- “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exod 22:21)
- “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)
- “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt” (Deut. 10:18–19)

Jesus's clarion call of God's final judgment in Matt 25:31–46

- I was a stranger and you welcomed me
- And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you
- 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.

Veritatis Splendor, John Paul II

Moral absolutes are “certain specific kinds of behavior that are always wrong to choose.”

Choosing them always involves a “moral evil,” and 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.

Veritatis Splendor:

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html

According to Aquinas:

The first precept of the natural law, upon which all others are based, is that “good is to be promoted and evil is to be avoided.” The next precept is that “whatever is a means of preserving human life and of warding off obstacles to life, belongs to the natural law.”

John Paul II's encyclical, Veritatus Splendor (1993)

What are these precepts? **Participating in, facilitating or turning one's back to the killing or torture of a human person** is one of them. **Preserving the family and protecting children** are also moral absolutes for Catholics.

Pope Leo XIII

(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).

Sapientiae Christianae:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15041979_sapientia-christiana.html

Pope Leo XIII

- It is a Catholic's affirmative duty always to preserve human life and to ward off obstacles to human life
- Although the right to private property is found in the natural law, the Catholic who has amassed enough to take care of self and family, has a duty to use his wealth to support those who do not – not to advocate stronger borders in order to protect riches, a culture or a higher standard of living

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.

Exsul Familia Nazarethana:

<https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius12/p12exsul.htm>

Pius plainly stated

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.

Pius concluded

- The right of people to migrate is found in the natural law itself
- It is inevitable, given the nature of the earth, which is vast and includes both habitable and uninhabitable places that some families will migrate
- The right of a family to be together in a living space is fundamental to natural law
- “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.”

Pius recognized that countries have borders

. . . 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.

Pius severely condemned “exaggerated nationalism”

- Because “these things arbitrarily restrict the natural rights of people to migrate.”
- “Those in need, whose own lands lack the necessities of life” should be allowed to emigrate to other countries.

John Paul II Centisimus Annus

- The “transcendent human dignity” of every human person must be protected in every situation (§5).
- 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).

Centésimus Annus:

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centisimus-annus.html

John Paul II Centisimus Annus

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).

John Paul II stressed the sacred need always to protect *the family* as the “sanctuary of life” (§39). He explicitly recognizes as natural human rights: *the right to live in a united family* and in a moral environment conducive to the growth of the child's personality; . . . and *the right to derive from [] work the means to support oneself and one's dependents*; and the right to establish a family. . . (§47) (emphasis added)

Our duties to other people are not limited by borders but “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

“There are those who say: And why not do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just” (§78)

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).

Veritatis Splendor:

http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html

Breakout group suggested questions and guidelines

Questions

- 1) What prompted you to join the presentation tonight?
- 2) After listening to Linda's presentation, how has your perspective and understanding of the immigration situation in this country changed (if at all)?
- 3) What surprised you about what you heard?

Guidelines

- You will have 15 minutes in groups of four.
- Please make sure everyone has time to share their response to at least one question.
- You do not have to answer all the questions.
- You do not have to answer any of the questions if you don't wish to!
- Please do not critique other people's responses.

CALL TO ACTION

'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.' *Matthew 25: 46*

Come back next week, July 15

Educate yourself on Scripture, Church teaching, and history, and what is really happening to migrating people in the world. Here are a few suggestions:

--*The New Odyssey: the Story of the 21st Century Refugee Crisis*, Patrick Kingsley (Norton, 2017) [explains the Syrian refugee crisis]

--*One Mighty and Irresistible Tide: the Epic Struggle over American Immigration, 1924-1965*, Jia Lynn Yang (Norton, 2020) [story of racial exclusion in the U.S.]

--*The End of the Myth: From the Frontier to the Border Wall in the Mind of Americans*, Greg Grandin (Henry Holt, 2019) [page turner of U.S. history]

Talk to People! Don't avoid the difficult conversations – when someone says something hostile about migrants or undocumented people, speak up. Particularly within our Church community, we cannot be silent any more.

CALL TO ACTION (continued)

Vote. And remember, while you are voting, John Paul II's words: "there are those who say: And why not do evil that good may come? Their condemnation is just" *Veritatis Splendor* (§78) Catholics do not choose "lesser of two evils." We do not prioritize some lives over others.

Donate to organizations that support immigrants.

Catholic Charities of L.A. Immigrant Rights Clinic (Esperanza)

Loyola Law School Immigrant Justice Clinic (at Dolores Mission)

KINO Border Initiative

Kids in Need of Defense ("KIND")

Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights (child advocates for unaccompanied minors)

Bishop David O'Connell's fund for immigrant kids (ask me)

Accompany/Meet/Welcome migrant children here in Los Angeles: opportunities are endless. Liaise with a child's school, tutor, drive to court hearings, meet at the library to read, arrange or facilitate counseling, accompany on trips to doctor or dentist, friendship (Jeff Hamilton and Sylvia LeSage to explain)