

# The problem of immigration must be solved

The word “immigration” in our daily language, and especially in political language, has become a buzz word because it immediately raises passions of all kinds, and many times, very contradictory ones.

On the one hand, after Sept. 11, our country was obliged to take all measures possible to guarantee internal security, and to block the presence of people who intend to destroy or damage our nation. On the other hand, the United States is still a country whose cultural, social and economic vitality depends, in good measure, on the many contributions made by immigrants in our society.

There is no doubt that immigration is a serious problem in our country and around the world. While the public debate grows in intensity, we must seek solutions that are realistic, but at the same time, humanitarian and worthy of the compassionate and caring society intended by the Founding Fathers of this nation. Our beloved Pope John Paul II, referring to the drama of migration in the world, stated that every nation has the right to protect its border and to regulate the flow of people who cross it; but at the same time, he recalled the fact that the possibility of migrating in the search of a better future is a human right that cannot be violated.

On the one hand, as the pope mentioned, and as the social doctrine of the church teaches, the United States must guarantee the security of its citizens, and for this reason, must control its borders. However, we need to find a balanced and sensible solution, because every radical “solution,” inspired exclusively upon prejudices or feelings of hatred will only worsen the problem.

A nation that aspires to be a beacon of democracy, justice and solidarity for the world, must share its blessings with others. Any solution for the immigration problem must be based upon the fundamental principles of our Christian-inspired values such as respect for the dignity of the human person and for the right of the family to be together.

Security and border control must include legal means that hold back illegal immigration. It also, however, must make it possible for the hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, needed by the country to guarantee the vitality of its economy, to get legal recognition, without the fear of losing their jobs. A just and compassionate immigration policy must also provide the opportunity for people to be with their loved ones frequently enough to maintain a stable family life.

National security itself requires being able to identify those who are already in the United States and to value the contribution they are making to the national economy.

The issue of immigration is a real challenge that must be faced by our elected officials with a deep sense of justice. To ignore it, or to treat it with simplistic solutions, will only make it worse.

There are many elements involved in the question of immigration, including the accountability of the government of the countries from which come the majority of our immigrants.

We, as Catholics, need to encourage answers inspired by the Gospel, the eternal source of wisdom and prudence. Let us not forget: every proposal made without God, in the long run, will be a decision made against the human person; not only against those who are immigrants, but against all of us as a nation.

Let us pray that the Lord may inspire our legislators and authorities to find an immigration solution filled with wisdom, prudence and solidarity. We must pray that the decisions made will bring us closer to the American dream of a safe and secure nation that loves the law. We must be a nation that remains open to the contributions of immigrants, without whom our country would never be the greatest country in the world.