

WHEREAS we have promised in our Baptismal covenant to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves; to strive for justice and peace among all people; and to respect the dignity of every human being;

WHEREAS Christ calls us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, and visit the imprisoned (Mt 25: 31-46);

WHEREAS our Scriptures reflect a profound empathy with the plight of the exile, teaching us that it is right to love the foreigner, and to give him food and clothing (Dt 10:17-19); that when a stranger lives with us in our land we must not mistreat him or oppress him (Ex 22:21); that the foreign born living among us must be treated as our native-born; and we must love them as we love ourselves (Lev. 19:33-34);

WHEREAS, in his death, Christ destroyed the barrier between near and far, citizen and alien, making peace and reconciling both to God through the cross, such that all are members of the house of God, with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (Eph. 2:14-20);

WHEREAS the United States is a nation founded by immigrants, benefiting from centuries of immigrant contributions to the sciences, the arts, governance, manual labor, our national defense, entertainment, and culture;

WHEREAS the proposed anti-immigrant bill before Congress, HR 4437, would have a devastating impact on both citizen and non-citizen in the United States:

1. by instantly making the 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States guilty of the new aggravated felony of "illegal presence", subjecting them to imprisonment and permanent exclusion from the United States without regard for whether the accused is a child; a member of a mixed-citizenship family; a long-term resident; or a technical violator such as a visiting student who has dropped below a full course load, a legal visiting worker who has been temporarily laid off, or a lawful permanent resident who fails to report a change of address to the Department of Homeland Security within ten days;

2. by inexcusably expanding the definition of "alien smuggling" to include assisting any person trying to remain in the United States, thereby imposing criminal liability on churches, social service providers, legal and medical professionals, employers, friends, or even spouses of an immigrant who may "assist" with a ride to work, a counseling session, help with immigration paperwork, or a glass of water;

3. by dramatically increasing penalties for those who come to the United States illegally, those who "assist" them, and those who employ them, threatening to imprison literally millions of people;

4. by forcing local law enforcement to enforce federal immigration laws, undermining their ability to protect public safety when immigrants inevitably stop reporting crimes and emergencies for fear of bringing police into the lives of their families and neighbors;

5. by ignoring the reality that immigrant labor is a necessary and healthy part of our economy; and that the United States Chamber of Commerce has repeatedly asked for both an efficient temporary worker program and an efficient legal mechanism for the qualified, screened undocumented migrants now in the country, to no avail;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, we urge our elected representatives to reject HR 4437 and to work for meaningful reform of our immigration laws.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we advocate an efficient legalization process for immigrants who currently do not have documents, a reunification priority for families of mixed immigration status that face separation, and a legal labor program that provides opportunities for future immigrants to legally enter our country to work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we support the formation of immigration policy that will protect the basic human rights of immigrant workers, guard them against abuse and exploitation, and ensure that they are treated with dignity within our economic and judicial systems.

Respectfully submitted,

The Very Reverend Scott Richardson, Dean
The Reverend Canon Mary Moreno Richardson, Canon for Hispanic Ministry
Ms. Marian Gaston, Esq., Chair of the Peace and Justice Committee

Saint Paul's Cathedral, San Diego

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