



DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

The Right Reverend John Bryson Chane
Bishop of Washington

May 1, 2006

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Eastertide greetings. In the weeks leading up to Holy Week and Easter, our nation has witnessed an outpouring of support for reforming our immigration system to bring relief to the millions among us who, while lacking legal status, have enriched our nation with their labor. These immigrant sisters and brothers have for too long lived in fear of deportation and remain marginalized within our society.

On Monday, May 1st, I ask that parishes and parishioners in the Diocese of Washington join activists around the country in a *National Day of Action* to pray that our nation will honor its tradition of welcoming the stranger into our midst and accord to these guests the respect that our Baptismal covenant requires of us. The Episcopal Church has lent its voice alongside communities of faith who have asked Congress to seize this moment and enact immigration legislation which is both just and practical. In turn, I ask you to observe May 1st as a day of prayer calling on our elected officials to hear the plea of millions of migrants that their labor and humanity be honored through a more just immigration system. I encourage you to express yourself in whatever ways seem appropriate in favor of a fair deal for our immigrant brothers and sisters. In doing so, we shall be holding hands, at least symbolically, with persons of faith and immigrant friends across the nation who have pledged to support comprehensive immigration reform.

The desire of millions to escape brutalizing poverty and to bring a modicum of economic security to their families should not result in their criminalization or deportation. The spirit that motivates immigration reform should also extend to those outside our borders whose labor is needed by many sectors of our economy. We should acknowledge this reality by increasing opportunities for workers to enter our country safely to pursue productive lives in communities throughout our land where laborers are needed. Allowing an increasing number of newcomers to enter our workforce legally will bring vitality and energy to our nation and uphold the tradition which we have had as a place where opportunity abounds and those who seize it enrich themselves as they enrich the fabric of our society.

Regardless of the outcome of the current immigration debate, I urge faithful members to embrace fully the gospel of hospitality and to witness an immigration system which reflects the call of Christ to receive the stranger as we would receive him.

In Christ's Peace, Power and Love,

The Rt. Rev. John Bryson Chane, D.D.
Bishop of Washington