

Help Needed: *What can you do?*

By Sr. Mary McCauley, BVM, former Pastoral
Administrator of St. Bridget, Postville

There are a variety of ways in which we encourage our readers to be in solidarity with our Hispanic brothers and sisters in Postville. We offer these suggestions.

Financial Assistance:

Our need to assist our people with their daily living expenses continues. Even after five month jail sentences were completed, not all detainees were deported.

Presently the **St. Bridget Hispanic Ministry Fund** is supporting 24 women and 1 man, who continue to live with GPS devices on their ankles. The court date for this group is set for November 6, 2009. In the meantime, they are not able to work. They and their families are totally dependent on the generosity of members of various faith communities.

In addition this fund supports those who served their jail sentence and then agreed to serve as witnesses for the government. Presently there are 35 named witnesses. Some were issued work permits and have been able to secure employment. Others (10) have not yet been able to obtain work and (8) have not yet been issued a work permit. It is those without work or work permits whom we continue to assist. Minors (15) who were detained and released and have agreed to serve as witnesses, also come to us for support.

Others have family members who were deported, but for a variety of reasons these persons have not yet returned to their home country. They, too, are in dire need.

The need for counseling and education is also apparent. Healing of the trauma experienced by individuals and families requires the services of a licensed, bilingual therapist as well as additional response team members. Case management for possible victims of human trafficking has also surfaced as a critical need.

To assist the persons mentioned above and to respond to other related issues places a heavy burden on our **St. Bridget Hispanic Ministry Fund**. We invite you to be a part of our privileged ministry. Your tax-deductible gift can be sent to

St. Bridget Hispanic Ministry Fund
% Paul Rael
PO Box 369
Postville, Iowa 52162

Social Advocacy

- Join us in advocating for comprehensive immigration reform and an end to raids. Urge your US Senators and Congressional Representatives to have this issue be a part of the 2009 legislative agenda. Plead with them to identify ways to permit those who desire to call America home to gain a legal path to citizenship.

- A letter to NY Senator Charles Schumer <http://schumer.senate.gov/>, the newly appointed Chair of the Senate Immigration-Sub Committee, would be appropriate.
- Contact Janet Napolitano, Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security. <http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm> In particular request that her department put an end to raids.
- Join one another in marches and rallies advocating for comprehensive immigration reform, just labor practices and an end to raids.

Education

- Continue to educate yourself about immigration issues.
- Be aware of how past and present economic and social policies have jeopardized the lives of many of our people, causing them to migrate. What can be done about the poverty and lack of opportunity within their own countries?
- Participate in educational forums that focus on immigration related issues.
- View Documentaries that help you to know and understand the plight of our immigrants and refugees such as the *Voice of a Mountain; Dying To Live; The Mountain Trembles, Strangers No Longer, Under the Same Moon*, etc.
- Read Enrique's Journey by Sonia Nazario.
- Investigate the following websites: <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>
<http://www.immigrationforum.org>
- Be aware of the **five principles** guiding the US Catholic Bishops concerning immigration:
 - Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland;
 - Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families;
 - Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders;
 - Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection;
 - The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected. (Taken from *Strangers No Longer...Together on the Journey of Hope....*(<http://www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml>)

Hospitality

- Take a good look at our own hearts and at the heart of our country. Are our hearts open to the stranger among us? Can we name and claim the giftedness of our 21st century immigrants?

- Become welcoming communities. Get to know your Latino brothers and sisters; become their friend.

Prayer

- Pray about and for the issue of immigration.
- Reflect on passages from the Hebrew or Christian Scriptures that pertain to the current issue of immigration.

Leviticus 19: 34...You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you, too, were once strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Micah 6:8 This is what is asked of you, only this, to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God.

Zechariah 7: 8-11 ... Apply the law fairly, and practice kindness and compassion toward each other. Do not oppress the widow and the orphan, the settler and the poor man, and do not secretly plan evil against one another.

Tobit 4: 7-8 ...Set aside part of your goods for almsgiving. Never turn your face from any poor man and God will never turn his from you.

Matthew 25: 35-40...For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me. I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.

Luke 4: 18-19...The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favor.

Galatians 3: 28...There are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 13: 1-2... Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have entertained angels.

Thank you for doing whatever you can to show your support and concern for those affected by the May 12, 2008 Immigration Raid in Postville and for actively advocating for comprehensive immigration reform.

