

Dear members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque,

I write to call your attention to the continued suffering experienced by our Hispanic brothers and sisters in and around Postville, Iowa.

Following the government action on May 12, 2008, more than three hundred of the persons were arrested and sentenced to five months in jail. In addition, forty-two women and three men were released with GPS devices on their ankles so they could care for their children. Trials for some of these have now been pushed back to November and December of this year, more than eighteen months after the raid. Some of those who have completed their sentences have returned to the Postville area to serve as government witnesses against Agriprocessors, the meatpacking plant.

From the day of the raid until now, the individuals released, their children, the children and families of those in prison, and others with past association with the meatpacking plant have been dependent on charity. Our pastoral staff at St. Bridget's parish, with much volunteer help, has heroically responded to their needs. St. Bridget's has assisted them with their living expenses (food, rent, utilities, medical), with legal fees and work on documentation, with transportation and communication with other members of their families, and with some counseling. We have increased our staff and updated our technology to deal with this increasingly complex situation.

Concerned people from the Archdiocese, from Iowa, and from virtually every state have been very generous. It was my hope that we could manage with these contributions. Unfortunately, we now foresee that the situation will continue at least through the rest of this year. I have therefore made an appeal to the bishops of all the dioceses in the country, asking them to bring before their communities the needs of the people suffering the consequences of our government's action in Postville.

With this letter, I wish to address you as well. Please learn more about the situation. In particular, work so that our country continues its tradition of fulfilling the command God gave long ago: "You shall treat

strangers and aliens who reside with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for them as for yourselves; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:34).

This is the Season of Lent, when we strive to increase our prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Social action committees in our parishes are invited to reflect upon the situation and decide on ways to respond. Much information is available on a new Web site (www.postvillestbridget.org) that we have created. Donations may be made through the web site or directly to St. Bridget (PO Box 369, Postville IA 52162).

I thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.
Archbishop of Dubuque