



Catholic Principles of Migration

Our approach to migration is rooted in the Gospel and in centuries of Catholic social teaching traditions. One such document is [*Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*](#), a pastoral letter concerning migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States. Below are five principles, that guide the Church's approach to migration.

I. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland.

All persons have the right to find in their own countries the economic, political, and social opportunities to live in dignity and achieve a full life through the use of their God-given gifts. In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

II. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders.

The Church recognizes the right of sovereign nations to control their territories and their borders. However, wealthier nations, which have the ability to better protect and feed their residents, have a strong obligation to accommodate migration flows.

III. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families.

The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have a right to find work

elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

IV. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection.

Those who flee wars and persecution should be protected by the global community. This requires, at a minimum, that migrants have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration and to have their claims fully considered by a competent authority.

V. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected.

Regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all persons, possess inherent human dignity that should be respected. Often they are subject to punitive laws and harsh treatment by enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary.

The Church recognizes the right of a sovereign state to control its borders in furtherance of the common good. It also recognizes the right of human beings to migrate so that they can realize their God-given rights. These teachings complement each other. While the sovereign state may impose reasonable limits on immigration, the common good is not served when the basic human rights of the individual are violated.

