



# BECAUSE WE ARE CATHOLIC

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CALIFORNIA SERVES AND ADVOCATES FOR THE POOR, VULNERABLE AND THOSE IN NEED NOT BECAUSE THEY ARE CATHOLIC, BUT *because we are Catholic.*



“ON THIS CONTINENT, TOO, THOUSANDS OF PERSONS ARE LED TO TRAVEL NORTH IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THEIR LOVED ONES, IN SEARCH OF GREATER OPPORTUNITIES. IS THIS NOT WHAT WE WANT FOR OUR OWN CHILDREN? WE MUST NOT BE TAKEN ABACK BY THEIR NUMBERS, BUT RATHER VIEW THEM AS PERSONS, SEEING THEIR FACES AND LISTENING TO THEIR STORIES, TRYING TO RESPOND AS BEST WE CAN TO THEIR SITUATION. TO RESPOND IN A WAY WHICH IS ALWAYS HUMANE, JUST AND FRATERNAL.”

– Pope Francis’ remarks to the U.S. Congress

## Year of Mercy: Hosting the Immigrant, A Call to Action

A major naturalization initiative is underway in many dioceses across California. Responding to the Pope’s call to action during this Year of Mercy, a Catholic gathering sponsored by the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and dioceses of Orange, San Diego and San Bernardino attracted hundreds to the Christ Cathedral in downtown Garden Grove.

California now leads the nation with over 2.4 million legal permanent residents eligible to naturalize. To become a citizen of the United States is a long and complicated process. Many people do not have the resources or finances to cover the expenses associated with obtaining citizenship. Those that are low-income, seniors or limited English speakers are especially vulnerable.

Many of those who are eligible for naturalization are apprehensive to start the process. Whether it is a lack of trust or language barrier, some simply do not know where they can turn. The church is a safe haven for them, offering a comfortable and reliable place to obtain help and guidance.

Archbishop Jose Gomez from Los Angeles opened the gathering by praising those present for their commitment to immigration matters. He stressed that the focus has to remain on the people and their stories. He concluded by encouraging attendees to “keep making a positive difference in people’s lives.”

Several shared their personal immigration journey. Orphaned during the Vietnam War, Sister Jennifer Nguyen was thankful that the United States welcomed her and her brother. She spoke of a harrowing escape after the fall of Saigon, where luckily her boat made it

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out of the dangerous territory. She hopes the United States continues to help those fleeing violence.

Teresa Alvarado González spoke of her family's start in California, where her father had a dream to give each of his children a supermarket to run. He knew he had to become naturalized to accomplish this. There are now 40 Northgate markets in California and Arizona which employ over 5,000 people.

The Ortiz Family discussed how Catholic Charities visited their church and inspired them to start the process of naturalization. Within three months they had completed the classes and were ready to take the exam.

Parishes from all over Southern California were in attendance and after listening to the speakers, were able to discuss ways to galvanize their congregations and set up parish orientation sessions on naturalization.

Los Angeles Bishop David O'Connell led the event that was organized by the Archdiocese's office of Life, Justice and Peace. It is their hope that the gathering will energize participants and they will return to their parishes with the knowledge they gained to start working on this important effort.

For more information on how you can become involved, please contact Mr. Jaime Huerta at [jahuerta@la-archdiocese.org](mailto:jahuerta@la-archdiocese.org).

#### *Helpful Websites*

Archdiocese of Los Angeles  
<http://www.la-archdiocese.org>

Catholic Charities of California  
<http://catholiccharitiesca.org>

CA Catholic Conference  
<http://www.cacatholic.org/immigration>

U.S. Dept. of Justice  
<https://www.justice.gov>



*Monica and Ricardo Ortiz tell their naturalization story*

**Professionally trained immigration advocates are always needed. A Board of Immigration (BIA) accreditation is one way to assist immigrants seeking help. The Immigration Legal Resource Center has created a 40-hour intensive training course for community based organizations. For more information on how to obtain the BIA Accreditation, visit the United States Department of Justice's website.**

*For more information, go to:*

[cacatholic.org](http://cacatholic.org)

Vatican Website:

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>

Year of Mercy Website

<http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en.html>