

\_\_\_\_\_ In this campaign, we have walked many miles, and we are close to reaching our goal: Cincinnati, Ohio. For the immigrants who are fortunate enough to enter into the United States, the goal of their final destination does not always provide a true catharsis from their worries. Even upon arrival to their goal, no matter how far away from the border they may be, the threat of deportation is ever-present. Unlike our campaign, there is no clear finish-line for immigrants because every day is a challenge to remain in this land. Every day presents new trials and hardships to overcome.

Imagine living in a foreign land, where the culture, language, and perception of your presence serve as a constant reminder of your unbelonging. Here, you are the minority. Your lack of familiarity with your new environment causes even simple tasks to become difficult. Acquiring shelter, transportation, and work is complicated due to your status and it is possible that you may be taken advantage of for this. Further, there is little room for error in this new state of life. If injured on the job, going to seek treatment may expose you to the risk of deportation due to your lack of documentation. Sadly, for similar reasons, those in situations of abuse do not have the courage to seek assistance.

While this life in the United States is one that the immigrant willingly accepts, the conditions are far from luxurious. Despite the struggles, many consider themselves fortunate to have made it to this land of opportunity. The life of the immigrant is a radically pronounced experience of humanity. We all have moments where we feel out of place, misunderstood, or even paranoid as to how others may treat us. We may experience this to a lesser degree, yet we stand in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters when we are excluded or isolated due to our personal uniqueness. Our economic status, our education level, our occupation -- even our own faith as Catholics -- may be reason for some to belittle us. However, the wisdom of God teaches us that when we surrender ourselves to the way which society views us for the sake of our beliefs and identity, we are raised up. We learn this from our Savior and we feel in our hearts His strength when we entrust to God the circumstances of our situation. As we

continue our endeavor to walk in solidarity with our immigrant brothers and sisters, let us consider the following:

- What are the aspects in my life that cause me to feel out of place? How do I react to the feeling of being the minority? Do I hide in embarrassment or do I embrace this uniqueness?
- How do I feel toward those who are different than me? What are some of my defense mechanisms that keep me separate from others who are different? Are these healthy? If not, how do I overcome them?

**Solidarity Challenge:** Engaging the difference of others is uncomfortable and must be handled with delicacy. Throughout this week, attempt to have a constructive dialogue with someone who shares a different perspective from you. Endeavor to understand their perspective, and respectfully offer yours as we attempt to bridge the barriers that divide us.

Prayer:

One only Holy Spirit of Father and Son, in whom all are baptized. One giver of many gifts, one tree of many fruits, one speaker of every tongue, renew in our day the wonders of Pentecost. Grant that people of every race and nation may understand one another, and as one, proclaim the praises of God. Grant that all may be one as you, Spirit, with the Father and the Son, are one God, one Lord. Grant unity to the Body of Christ; grant unity to the human family. Sole breath of every living thing, may all be one who, in you, live and move and have their being. --*Carl Moeddel, former auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.*