

## What Are They Thinking? A Look at Roman Catholic “Doctrine” on Immigration

By Dominique Peridans

### Introduction: The Church Trying to Gain Momentum

It takes little effort to notice and to conclude that the Roman Catholic Church has, in the past few years, intensified its lobbying on behalf of immigrants and thus has intensified its lobbying on behalf of “comprehensive immigration reform”.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it can be argued that “comprehensive immigration reform”, as envisioned by the Church and by those who stand in agreement with her, is designed primarily to benefit immigrants, especially *illegal* immigrants, more than it is designed to benefit the current national population.<sup>2</sup>

The Church’s lobbying stems from, dare I say, an erroneous application, in the political sphere, of the Christian perspective on immigration. The Christian perspective on immigration makes no distinction between legal and illegal. Actually, allow me to be more precise: the Christian perspective on *immigrants* makes no distinction between legal and illegal. The Christian perspective on immigrants makes no distinction between legal and illegal because the Christian perspective *per se* does not see “immigrant” but sees “child of God”.

St. Paul, in a letter to the Christian community in Galatia, dated somewhere between 50 and 58 AD, articulates well this deeper perspective: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” One could easily add: “neither legal immigrant nor illegal immigrant”.<sup>3</sup> This is a properly Christian perspective, a faith perspective that considers each individual in the light of the One considered to be the God-man, Jesus Christ, beyond human categories. Edwin O’Brien, then-Archbishop of Baltimore, articulated this perspective in a letter<sup>4</sup> about illegal immigrants dated July 16, 2008: “Dare we look at these human beings as made in the image and likeness of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ? Dare we look at them, in other words, with and through the eyes of Christ for whom no one is illegal, no one alien, no one a criminal who labors honestly to feed his family?”

### Translating the Christian Perspective

The issue is not the Christian perspective. The issue is the application or translation of the Christian perspective in the political realm — In other words, as we colloquially say, “where the rubber hits the road”. The question is: How does a Christian live this perspective in the real world?<sup>5</sup> In the real world, there *are* Jews and Gentiles, males and females, and, as long as there are national communities and corresponding laws, legal immigrant and illegal immigrants. How does the Christian perspective translate in day-to-day life in our society? Does it replace the insights of ethics and political philosophy, indeed, of common sense?

For some well-meaning ministers, the Christian perspective, by virtue of its depth and breadth, absorbs and, in so doing, supplants all other perspectives. As though it can be, the Christian perspective is directly applied to the political sphere, and, much to the intellectual dismay of many, a host of lines are blurred (some claim that “academic reflection (*including theological*) requires its own transborder discourse”<sup>6</sup>). As a result, the Church takes liberties freely to frame “comprehensive immigration reform” as a logical, long-overdue expression of the true

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“sentiment in our national soul . . . of welcome and embrace to the immigrant”<sup>7</sup> — to use the words of Archbishop Timothy Dolan. “Comprehensive immigration reform” is considered the Christian thing to do, and, by simplistic superimposition, is quite “naturally” and automatically considered the fulfillment of the American dream and mission.

### The Church’s Current Hierarchical Fervor

Archbishop Timothy Dolan of New York, President of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, has become rather vocal in his expression of what he claims is the position of the Church on immigration. He returned from the Vatican in February of this year, a newly appointed cardinal, feeling empowered on the issue, and has since made it an even more explicit priority. In a *New York Times* article published shortly thereafter, he is quoted as having said, for example, “The church has been the engine of welcoming people, caring for them and getting them settled as happy, productive citizens who are loyal citizens and loyal Catholics . . . . It bothers me that for the first time in American Catholic history, we may not be responding well to the needs of immigrant children in our Catholic schools.”<sup>8</sup>

His fervor is not recent, however. In 2010, in an April 27 entry in his Diocesan blog, he tellingly reacts to Arizona’s immigration law, signed by Governor Jan Brewer only days before on April 23: “Arizona is so scared, apparently, and so convinced that the #1 threat to society today is the immigrant that it has passed a mean-spirited bill of doubtful constitutionality that has as its intention the expulsion of the immigrant. What history teaches us, of course, is that not only are such narrow-minded moves unfair and usually unconstitutional, but they are counterproductive and harmful.”<sup>9</sup> I did not realize that the Sacrament of Orders, whereby a (male) member of the Roman Catholic Church becomes a priest (from where he can be elevated to the fullness of the Sacrament, that is to say, to the rank of bishop), *de facto* infuses the ordained with knowledge of constitutional law and the gift of reading hearts. Actually, according to the teaching of the Church, it does not. Yet, in this case, the archbishop, speaking as an ordained minister, claims constitutional knowledge, and presumes to read fear and meanness in Arizonans. Such presumption, and the social arguments used by the archbishop to support his position, has intellectually rubbed many persons the wrong way. One need but read the responses to the archbishop’s blog entry: the majority of his faithful followers stand in disagreement, with intelligent arguments.<sup>10</sup>

### A Short-Sighted, “Practical” Disconnect

In the midst of what is really an ecclesial non-conversation about immigration, the important, emerging question is probably: What theologically animates and informs the position that the Roman Catholic Church in the United States has taken on the issue of immigration? What is the thinking behind the immigration stance of the more traditional ecclesial bodies? Indeed, the position of the Roman Catholic Church, the largest of these bodies, is, in essence, the same as that of the Episcopal Church and of the four largest mainline Protestant churches: (in order of size): Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, and Presbyterian.<sup>11</sup> Each of the churches articulates a similar, specific position, a position that is articulated, however, by the *leadership* of these Christian denominations.<sup>12</sup> These positions are not necessarily an expression of what church members, “average” persons in the pew, think. In fact, according to a 2009 Zogby poll,<sup>13</sup> these positions clearly do *not* reflect the thoughts of the majority of the former. The largest ever done on this topic, the Zogby poll reveals the surprising abyss between the perspective on immigration by church leadership and the perspective on immigration by church membership. For example, as revealed in the Zogby poll, while 64 percent of the Roman Catholic lay population support enforcement to encourage illegal aliens to go home, the Roman Catholic hierarchy takes the position that the only humane political route to take in dealing with them is “comprehensive immigration reform”. As with many advocates of “comprehensive immigration reform”, this is code for legalization of the entire illegal immigrant population. Why? Because the current generous levels of legal immigration in the United States<sup>14</sup> already reflect the hospitality that the Church seeks to promote, and because the immigration restrictions that do exist reflect the national sovereignty acknowledged by the Church as legitimate.

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For the Roman Catholic Church, there is really no disagreement with immigration law *per se*. The real issue is the large number of illegal immigrants currently in the nation and how to handle them. With short-sightedness, the Roman Catholic hierarchy sees broad, quasi-unconditional welcome of them as the only national option. Such welcome is considered the only veritable expression of charity and the only way to respect human dignity. The Church admits that there is some issue with the illegality of these immigrants, and so minor penalties are proposed; but these need not be too harsh, or the same dignity would be disrespected. As articulated in the article excerpt below by Archbishop Jose Gomez of Los Angeles, disagreement over how to handle illegal immigrants is confusingly cloaked by the Roman Catholic hierarchy in pious appeals, based on supposed humanitarian concerns, for changes in immigration policy.<sup>15</sup> Why “confusingly”? Because the contradictory message from the Church is: “Let us change the laws governing immigration, even though we actually agree with them”. In other words, Roman Catholic leadership has placed itself between a rock and a hard place: it knows that current immigration law is, in fact, just; but, when it filters concrete *enforcement* of the law through its ideology, it shouts “*un-just*”. A more honest statement from the Roman Catholic hierarchy would be something along the lines of: “We know immigration law to be sound and fair. In fact, the United States has a generous immigration policy. But may we strike a *one-time* deal regarding the current illegal immigrant population, a deal which strikes us as more humanitarian?”

Instead, as suggested, we have confusing messaging. Simply read the words of Archbishop Gomez, Chair for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration since 2010, from the *Washington Post* piece dated April 24, 2012:

“Currently there are an estimated 11 million persons living in our country without proper legal documentation. The vast majority of these persons are working and contributing to our economy and society. But because of their immigration status they are forced to live in the shadows, without adequate benefits or protections against discrimination and exploitation. It is true, many of these people entered this country illegally or they came in legally with a tourist visa and they stayed longer after their visa expired. That fact troubles me. I do not like to see our American rule of law flouted. And I support just and appropriate penalties that would give undocumented workers a way to make restitution and to legalize their status. America has always been a nation of justice and law. But as Americans we have also always been a people of generosity, mercy and forgiveness. Unfortunately, our nation’s current response to illegal immigration is not worthy of our national character. My point is simple: We need to find a better way to make immigration policy and enforce it.”<sup>16</sup>

## “Official” Position

In a 2002 document entitled *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*,<sup>17</sup> jointly published by the Bishops of the United States and the Bishops of Mexico, five principles emerge from Roman Catholic social teaching that the Bishops believe ought to “guide the Church’s view on migration issues”. These principles provide an ethical orientation, but they provide no concrete guidance, and no particular order between them is specified.

“1. Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland — people have a right to find work and work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.

“2. Persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families — the goods of the earth belong to all peoples. When life-sustaining employment cannot be found in their country of origin, people have the right to migrate and nations should provide ways to accommodate this right.

“3. Sovereign nations have the right to control their borders — while granting this right of control, such control is rejected when it is exerted merely for the purpose of acquiring additional wealth.

“4. Refugees and asylum seekers should be afforded protection — those who flee persecution have a right to claim refugee status without incarceration.

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“5. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected — regardless of their legal status, migrants, like all human beings, possess inherent human dignity and that dignity should be respected.”

This chapter is concluded with this observation:

“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 persons 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.”

In the same document, we also find the Church’s promotion of “comprehensive immigration reform”, which for all intents and purposes overrides national sovereignty: “[T]he U.S. Congress should enact a legalization program for immigrants regardless of their country of origin.” And, in an attempt to assuage any fears that might result from such an indiscriminate approach to immigration, and so better to support its position, the bishops state: “A broad legalization program of the undocumented would benefit not only the migrants but also both nations. Making legal the large number of undocumented workers from many nations who are in the United States would help to stabilize the labor market in the United States, to preserve family unity, and to improve the standard of living in immigrant communities. Moreover, migrant workers, many of whom have established roots in their communities, will continue to contribute to the U.S. economy.” Thus, from a theological document emerges what is in fact a political stance and agenda; moreover, one that, as stated, stands at odds with the majority of church members.

Another example of divergence in perspective between leadership and membership is with respect to illegal immigrants and employment. Catholic hierarchy takes the position that more unskilled immigrant workers are needed to fill jobs that Americans do not want to fill, a perspective commonly articulated by advocates of high levels of immigration (in which the distinction between legal immigrant and illegal immigrant is often conveniently blurred). Interestingly, however, 69 percent of Catholic laity thinks that there are plenty of Americans available to fill such jobs; employers need simply pay more.

Most churches seem to recognize this divergence in perspective between leadership and membership. As was noted in a United Methodist New Service (UMNS) report on May 27, 2010, “the church is speaking to a nation where many believe the United States should have greater restrictions on immigration. Mainline Protestant church members tend to mirror the wider U.S. public in their opinions on immigration issues.”<sup>18</sup> The same holds true for the Roman Catholic Church. Yet, there seems to be no thoughtful consideration given to what church members are saying. And input from the laity is not reflected in the statements of Church leadership.

This distance in perspective is not the subject of our reflections, but it does pose important questions. Have the laity all been co-opted by secularism, and find themselves to be insufficiently formed and informed by faith? Do we have a classic example of the “knows” and “know-nots”? Is “faith-ful” insight reserved primarily to leadership? Does church leadership, therefore, hold the theological reins, and do the lay faithful, because they live in the land of rush hour and the stock market and soccer games and lawn care, stand theologically clueless?

Or, contradistinctively, we can perhaps ask, Whatever happened to what is called, in Catholic theological circles, *sensus fidelium*, the “sense of the faithful”, that is to say, the notion that the laity, by virtue of the gift of faith and the use of common sense, develop a true understanding of God and of life issues in the light of God? Whatever happened to the use of common sense? Are not the laity simply using common sense, which faith does not preclude, and simply considering the common good of the nation, which the Church does not preclude?

The aforementioned Archbishop Edwin O’Brien, currently Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, an order that ministers to Christians and those of other faiths in historic Palestine, during his tenure as Archbishop of Baltimore, made it very clear that the perspective that he promotes is official Church teaching. And he made it very clear that he believes that alternative perspectives are necessarily incorrect: “I know

that some of our Catholic faithful who read this have hardened their opinion — I would say their hearts — to a Christian view of this woeful, deplorable situation.”<sup>19</sup> The archbishop even suggests that what he proposes regarding immigration directly stems from the higher law to which all Christians owe allegiance, and is eternal truth. He attempts to give his argument weight that no one can seemingly refute: “For many Catholics, there are some issues on which the Church’s teaching is difficult to accept. Immigration is seemingly one of these issues.” But, “we must remember that, above all, we are called to a higher natural law . . . we are — each and every one of us — His children . . . . This is not a platitude; rather it is the eternal truth.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, “We know. You do not. You cannot, if you are a child of God, circumvent our position, for it is the only one that represents the precept of charity. Deal with it. No one ever said the faith journey would be a cake walk.” Such words are echoed by certain “theologians of immigration”: “If the term ‘alien’ is to be used at all, it would be descriptive not of those who lack political documentation, but of those who have so disconnected themselves from God and others that they are incapable of seeing in the vulnerable stranger a mirror of themselves, a reflection of Christ, and an invitation to human solidarity.”<sup>21</sup>

### Fideism: The Silencing of the Mind

How then *does* the Christian perspective translate in the political realm? The verse from Paul’s letter to the Galatians,<sup>22</sup> mentioned in the opening statement, inspires great hope, and, in many, awakens ideals of a world of perfect harmony for humanity. Paul speaks, however, of the “mystical” union of Christian believers, of the Church as “Body of Christ”, of those persons joined as brothers and sisters in Christ by divine love, which springs from the gift of grace. He speaks of a mysterious *spiritual* reality, in which Christians believe and access by faith. He does not speak of a political reality. And he does not suggest that this oneness in God, that of the Church (in its spiritual, not institutional reality), eliminates the various distinctions that he mentions, distinctions of individuals (which can become distinctions of human communities). Paul articulates that, in Christ, God realizes a new oneness, *deeper* than these distinctions. In other words, Paul suggests that the work of God, in the human heart, does not eliminate human originality and human character, and thus natural gatherings of human beings in community based on these various originalities and characters.

We must also recall the words of Jesus himself (recorded in all three synoptic gospels — presumably for the force with which Jesus said them) when asked about paying taxes to Caesar, their oppressor, “Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.”<sup>23</sup> Jesus suggests that his presence does not eliminate that of Caesar nor render Caesar’s role obsolete. Why? Because, as Jesus is quoted as stating in the gospel of John, chapter 18, verse 36, when on trial before Pontius Pilate, his “kingdom is not of this world.”

The Roman Catholic bishops reiterate Jesus’ words, but only in passing. They make little attempt at theological development of Jesus’ statement, at expounding upon sovereignty of nations as one of the principles meant to “guide the Church’s view on migration issues”.<sup>24</sup> Jesus, in fact, articulates a more fundamental truth that is, unfortunately, insufficiently developed by the bishops: The kingdom of God respects human reality, from which it is distinct. And in respecting human reality, the kingdom of God respects distinctions (or differences) between persons and communities.

This Christian theological axiom is complemented by another simple, very helpful theological axiom, found in most ecclesial circles, that sheds further light: the work of the Redeemer respects the work of the Creator. The renewing work wrought by Christ respects the natural order come from the Creator. The “structure” of who we are as human beings is not changed by our encounter with God in Christ. Something deep inside us is touched by God, and we are granted access to the mystery of God. But we must still, while guided by God in a way that is deeply respectful of human freedom, think for ourselves, and make our own political and personal choices, and plan our own futures, and decorate our own homes, and play our own games, and wiggle our own toes. Divine intimacy does not eliminate human autonomy and responsibility. Consequently, the kingdom of God is not the global village.

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To speak of something belonging to Caesar presupposes the legitimacy of Caesar's authority. Caesar's authority is legitimate not because it is well exercised, but because the community over which he has authority is legitimate, is a human reality that the kingdom of God respects. Caesar's community is a *sovereign* nation. It is interesting to note the consistency with which Jesus maintains this legitimate reality and the respect that it demands — even by members of the community who have been persecuted. Jesus asks his disciples, Christians, to respect the political authority of a leader who is persecuting them! He is not asking them to legitimate, and thus tolerate, the injustices. However, Jesus makes it clear that the injustices committed by Caesar do not render entirely null his legitimate authority nor do they render the Christian members of the Roman Empire non-members. If still members, then there is legitimate respect that must be paid: primarily to the common good and, in the light of the common good, to those in authority whose purpose it is to safeguard the common good. Again, such respect does not mean that injustice must be tolerated. It simply underscores the continued existence of human political reality even with, what Christians believe to be, the arrival of the kingdom of God with and in Christ Jesus. In other words, Jesus' authority infinitely transcends that of Caesar, but does not render it null and void.

We find such respect for human reality, and thus human community, already in the Old Testament (despite the use of the Old Testament by some to argue for the sweeping legalization of all illegal immigrants in the United States). Allow me to indicate a professor of Old Testament and Near Eastern archaeology at Trinity International University, James Hoffmeier, from whose work "The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible"<sup>25</sup> I quote:

"Even in ancient times, there were clearly delineated lands or countries." (p. 29) "National boundaries were normally honored." (p. 32) "A foreigner passing through the territory of another had to obtain permission to do so." (p. 33) "Abraham recognized that he was an immigrant or alien" and as an outsider "was respectful of the native population and their customs and laws." (p. 48) "There was a distinction made between a legal sojourner or resident alien (*ger*) who was taking up more permanent residence and a foreigner (*nekhar* or *zar*)." (p. 57) In other words, in Biblical times, there was an acknowledged distinction between legal immigrant and the equivalent of *il*-legal immigrant. And the Biblical laws that speak of aliens and promote charitable treatment of them apply to *legal* immigrants ("the word *ger* occurs more than 60 times in the legal section of the Torah" p.71). This does not mean, of course, that illegal immigrants were (or are) to be treated disrespectfully or inhumanely. It means that they were not afforded all of the same rights (which does not constitute inhumane treatment). In Biblical times, therefore, there was an acknowledged distinction between basic human rights and civil rights. The illegal immigrant was guaranteed basic human rights, which, of course, include respectful and humane treatment, but they did "not enjoy the benefits and protections afforded to the alien (*ger*)".

Pope Benedict, then Cardinal Ratzinger, delves into questions of the distinction between the divine and the human, between the kingdom of God and the natural order, in addressing the question of liberation theology.<sup>26</sup> He begins by acknowledging the need for faith and love to translate into action, and to serve as transforming leaven in society. Indeed, justice must be sought by Christians.

"More than ever, the Church intends to condemn abuses, injustices, and attacks against freedom, wherever they occur and whoever commits them. She intends to struggle, by her own means, for the defense and advancement of the rights of mankind, especially of the poor. Love must be incarnate. The demands of the New Covenant for Christians do not remove Christians from the world."

However, he goes on to say, and in so doing begins to sketch the distinction between the kingdom of God and the natural order:

"New Testament revelation teaches us that *sin* is the greatest evil, since it strikes man in the heart of his personality. The first liberation, to which all others must make reference, is that from *sin*."

Of course, the life of a Christian is marked by the unavoidable challenge of living in the world with this spiritual happening that occurs deep within (and, in a sense, beyond the world) and allowing faith and love to inspire action; but there is a distinction and an order between the two:

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“Unquestionably, it is to stress the radical character of the deliverance brought by Christ and offered to all, be they politically free or slaves, that the New Testament does *not* require some change in the political or social condition as a prerequisite for entrance into this freedom. However, the *Letter to Philemon* shows that the new freedom procured by the grace of Christ should necessarily have effects on the social level.”<sup>27</sup>

Cardinal Ratzinger then articulates some of what happens when the distinction is not maintained:

“According to this conception, class struggle is the driving force of history. ... There is only one history, one in which the distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary. ... There is a tendency to identify the kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement, and to make history itself the subject of its own development, as a process of the self-redemption of man by means of class struggle. (And he adds: “This identification is in opposition to the faith of the Church.”).

“Some go so far as to identify God Himself with history and to define faith as ‘fidelity to history’, which means adhering to a political policy which is suited to the growth of humanity, conceived as a purely temporal messianism.”<sup>28</sup>

“Faith, hope, and charity are given a new content: they become ‘fidelity to history’, ‘confidence in the future’, and ‘option for the poor.’ This is tantamount to saying they have been emptied of their theological<sup>29</sup> reality.

“As a result, participation in class struggle is presented as a requirement of charity itself.”<sup>30</sup>

Divine love takes root in human reality. *Of course*. Where else will it take root outside of God? It is to take root in all that we are, and transform us from within. But such love, which enables us to welcome one another with unprecedented depth, does not change human life in its natural reality. As suggested, people are still human, still have bodies, still create amazing things thanks to creative inspiration, still interact with a universe that is sometimes overwhelming, and still form human communities. Christians — no differently than non-Christians — are “social animals”;<sup>31</sup> hence, the development of another theological axiom that has rung true throughout the centuries in (most) Christian circles: “grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it”.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, Thomas Aquinas, Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, asks very interesting questions about the relationship between grace and nature, between the supernatural and the natural, between what God does in human beings beyond that with which they are naturally endowed and their natural endowment. And he makes a host of enlightening theological statements in his work *Summa Theologica*.<sup>33</sup> In asking “whether it can be demonstrated that God exists?”<sup>34</sup> he states that “faith presupposes natural knowledge, even as grace presupposes nature”.<sup>35</sup> In his treatise on angels, he asks “whether natural knowledge and love remain in the beatified angels?”<sup>36</sup> He responds “it is manifest that nature (natural human knowing) is to beatitude (knowing God in seeing God) as first to second; because beatitude is superadded to nature. But the first must ever be preserved in the second. Consequently nature must be preserved in beatitude: and in like manner the act of nature must be preserved in the act of beatitude.”<sup>37</sup> In his various statements (that grace respects nature, that beatitude respects nature, that faith presupposes natural knowledge), Aquinas clearly iterates the distinction that ultimately lays the foundation for what I believe to be a sound Christian perspective on immigration. The Christian perspective on immigration is one that respects a sound *human* perspective on immigration.

An example of the autonomy of the human mind in matters of immigration is the work of Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, S.J., retired president of the University of Notre Dame, civil rights activist, chairman of the United States Commission on Civil Rights from 1969 to 1972, and starting in 1979, chairman of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy, a body created by Congress and President Jimmy Carter. The commission was not a faith commission, or a commission composed of faith leaders. It was a commission of 16 political thinkers and leaders: four people selected by the president from the general public, four members from the Senate, four members from the House of Representatives, and four cabinet members whose departments are directly concerned with immigration

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(the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Labor, and the Secretary of State). And, because he could and because that is how the human mind works, Fr. Hesburgh was able to engage in the reflection (not proceeding from Christian theology) needed to make policy proposals regarding immigration. In its 1981 document “U.S. Immigration Policy and the National Interest: Staff Report of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy”, the Commission, and thus Fr. Hesburgh, makes a clear distinction between legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. And, although encouraging continued generous welcome of legal immigrants, the primary proposals of the Commission regarding illegal immigrants are very different from what is being heard from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church: better border and interior enforcement and economic deterrents in the workplace. How different the perspective when it is the fruit of philosophical thought based on the reality of the common good instead of it resulting from a superimposed “faith” perspective that eliminates the former.

In underscoring the intellectual confusion underlying liberation theology, Cardinal Ratzinger, echoing Aquinas’ statements, speaks more deeply to the question of fideism (literally “faith-ism”). Mention has been obliquely made of it in stating that Christians, although elevated and enriched with what they believe to be revelation from God, must still think for themselves. The American analytic philosopher Alvin Carl Plantinga, the emeritus John A. O’Brien Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame and the inaugural holder of the Jellema Chair in Philosophy at Calvin College, defines fideism as the “exclusive or basic reliance upon faith alone, accompanied by a consequent disparagement of reason and utilized especially in the pursuit of philosophical truth”.<sup>38</sup> With the issue of immigration, the Roman Catholic hierarchy has fallen into practicing what they have condemned: *fideism*, that is to say, the suppression of philosophical thought and common sense by faith — in this case, for the sake of vague principles of Christian charity. Fideism is the issue at hand, and its consequences are far-reaching: liberation theology, the equation and confusion of the Church with the global village, international (“human family”) distributive justice overriding national commutative justice (even though “without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible”<sup>39</sup>), and the disappearance of the distinction between legal and illegal immigrant.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy is seeking to silence the minds of the faithful because they are in the process of silencing their own minds. Fideism is the silencing of the human mind in its capacity for autonomous thought. Fideism entails the presumed direct application of Christian principles to the social and political realm, to the disparagement of reason. The problem with the position of Archbishop O’Brien, as with that of Archbishop Dolan and many other Church leaders, is precisely the presumed direct application of the so-called Christian perspective on immigration, and a presumed resulting doctrine. However, Christian revelation *per se* sheds no new light on immigration. It is not meant to do so. Christian revelation sheds new light on (that is to say, opens) the mystery of God, and, in the light of God, on human beings as “divinized” individuals and as a spiritual community. Thus, there is no official doctrinal position on immigration. There are simply exhortations to generous charitable attitude and action toward immigrants. Notice what the Catechism of the Catholic Church, “a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith”,<sup>40</sup> states regarding immigration. It is nothing more than exhortation, with surprisingly greater emphasis placed on the rights of the receiving countries than on those of immigrants.

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.

“Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants’ duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”<sup>41</sup>

## Telling It Like It Is

The most intellectually honest position I have found relatively recently articulated in Roman Catholic circles was put forth by the Catholic Diocese of Charleston, which serves the entire state of South Carolina. It was reported by South Carolina's *The State* newspaper.<sup>42</sup> The position, it should be noted, articulated the perspective of the previous bishop, now Bishop of Birmingham, Ala., Robert Baker. "It's not a doctrinal issue," said Steve Gajdosik, the diocese's director of media relations. "It's a prudential issue. Well-formed, faithful Catholics and Christians can take different opinions because it is a prudential issue." Gajdosik added that the Church "is always going to seek to take care of people's humanitarian needs. However the bill turns out, the Catholic Church will do all in its power to take care of people's needs within the law." Now, Bishop Baker has since sued the governor of Alabama for the state's recent immigration legislation; thus, to what degree this position reflects his current thinking is unknown. But the statement was made, and is worth noting, and is, in my opinion, an example of intellectual honesty and accuracy.

The issue of immigration is indeed a prudential issue, not a doctrinal issue. The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on social issues — especially that of immigration, which is not black-and-white — indicates the main lines of ethical orientation. But in order that she be able to guide action, the Church needs competent people from the worlds of science and technology and the human and political sciences and philosophy.

## Not Telling It Like It Is

The most developed "theology of immigration" — a most intellectually unusual and perhaps *dis*-honest position — that I have found articulated in Roman Catholic circles, is that of Daniel Groody, Roman Catholic priest, immigrant advocate, associate professor of theology and the director of the Center for Latino Spirituality and Culture at the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame. Fr. Groody in the past has advised the Vatican's World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, and even received the 2012 Touchstone Award from the National Federation of Priests' Councils (NFPC) for his work in the Latino community and his scholarship in migration issues and theology. He is worth exploring because his theological arguments appear to be one of the major influences on the theology behind the Roman Catholic Church's statements on immigration. His perspective is also, for me, one of the most flagrant examples of fideism, of a faith perspective supplanting reason.

In "A Theology of Immigration", he states that "Catholic social teaching has reiterated that the true moral worth of any society is how it treats its most vulnerable members."<sup>43</sup> Most Christian churches essentially reiterate the same. And I personally stand in agreement. Indeed, having spent three years of my life working with mentally disabled adults,<sup>44</sup> and because of various ministries over the years, I have a special place in my heart for the vulnerable. And thus, on its surface, such a perspective stands in harmony with the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ, who was drawn to those who suffer, and generously healed them: "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened."<sup>45</sup> Does ministerially standing with vulnerable immigrants, however, eliminate considerations of legality altogether, as Groody essentially seems to suggest ("Before God we all live in the same country, we all live on the same side of the fence.")?

What often falls by the wayside, or gets lost in the mix, in such conversations on immigration is the simple fact that the prerequisite for (preferably good) treatment of vulnerable members of a society is that there *be* a society. In the arguments of a Fr. Groody (and others who espouse his "Christian" school of thought), society is stripped of its right to be, in favor of a universal community, of a global village. Oh, lip-service is, of course, paid, so to give a veneer of intellectual seriousness ("The Catholic church recognizes the right of a nation to control its borders, but it does not see this as an "absolute right," nor does it see sovereign rights as having priority over basic human rights."<sup>46</sup>) But, very quickly, such statements dissipate.

But why even such lip-service, some may ask, if society seems really viewed by the Church as an artificial construct, built on generations of discriminatory practices? Well, because society (regardless of its perhaps checkered history) is a fundamental and obvious reality, and not acknowledging it is a grotesque lack of basic realism. People form

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community.<sup>47</sup> There is no way to ignore this natural and universal human phenomenon. Thus, passing mention is made in *every* statement on immigration by the leadership of Roman Catholic Church. But, before the last sounds of such lip-service are whispered, another supposed truth is more loudly proclaimed, overshadowing society into non-existence, or at least relegating society into a camp of fearful existence, where it is plagued by guilt for daring to think that it might be able to manage its own distinct existence, especially if such management entails controlling its membership (which it can be argued, is actually an option so not to overshadow its vulnerable members). Groody does this well in stating, for example, that “the incarnation has much to say about a God who crosses borders in order to forge new relationships and the challenge to all human beings to do the same. Even if borders of nation states have some proximate value in constructing identity, protecting values, securing rights, and administering resources, from a Christian perspective, sovereign rights are subject to a larger vision of human rights, the common good, the kingdom of God, and the gratuity of God.”<sup>48</sup> Archbishop O’Brien, again, articulates a similar perspective, leaving the average church member probably thinking, “How dare I, and who am I to want to restrict the flow of immigrants into the country. I would be turning my back on those whom Christ is sending.” Indeed, he stated in the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s *Catholic Review* of February 5, 2011:

“We recognize the principle that our nation must protect and safeguard its borders. But we also suggest the more fundamental principle that, when the essential needs of people cannot be met in their homeland, those same people have the right to seek relief abroad, in order to support themselves and their families. Illegal immigration is by no means promoted, yet we cannot simply turn our back when it comes to serving the basic needs of those who have come to our country, like every generation before them, seeking a better life.”<sup>49</sup>

What theological principles does someone like Daniel Groody use to support his position, which is essentially and practically that of open borders? He appeals to various theological notions. He appeals, like many, most immediately to the precept of charity, of charity that, as such, knows no limits, no “borders”: “God’s Covenant was a gift and a responsibility; it reflected God’s goodness to them but also called them to respond to newcomers in the same way Yahweh responded to them in their slavery: ‘So you too must befriend the alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt.’”<sup>50</sup>

Groody also appeals metaphorically to various “border crossings” which, in turn, render obsolete national borders. Indeed, he states that “crossing borders is at the heart of human life, divine revelation and Christian identity.” As suggested, Groody essentially develops a theology, not of immigration, but of open borders, hoping in the end to leave the Christian believer, or any vulnerable reader, to conclude, “Who am I to argue with God?” It might even be more accurate simply to say that Groody tries to develop a theological argument for open borders. Indeed, any arguments that question open borders he dismisses as inhumane. Groody would, of course, disagree. As he claims “my primary purpose is not to make a case for or against open borders but to offer a new way of conceptualizing a difficult and contentious global issue. It seeks to broaden the intellectual terrain about migration and forge the beginnings of some theological foundations for such a perspective. Viewed as a theological concept, migration offers a rich hermeneutic for some of the most foundational dimensions of human existence and offers a different vantage point for making moral choices.”<sup>51</sup> Herein lies the flagrant fideism. Theology, strictly speaking, has no place in the political conversation on immigration. And migration, strictly speaking, is not a “theological concept”. It is a *human* issue. The Church, as all churches, has something to say about humane treatment of immigrants. But even this can be said from a sound philosophical perspective (replete with common sense), to which the Church can subsequently give the weight of moral authority, and reinforce, *for Church members*, with a theology of charity, of divine love.

Nonetheless, what are some of the border crossings of which Groody speaks?

“The more difficult borders to cross today are the borders of our own minds, especially those that guard our deep-seated biases and prejudices, and those we put up when we encounter someone we consider to be totally ‘other’. The Catholic Church itself affirms, again and again, that we are one body in Christ. In the Eucharist, the Church protests against the walls and barriers we set up between ourselves. If ‘migration’ worked itself into the self-definition of all people, we might then realize that before God we all live in the

same country, we all live on the same side of the fence. In reality, death is the ultimate border, the journey of faith is the ultimate migration, and God is the ultimate Promised Land. Christ teaches that we will be able to cross over this final border to the extent that we have been able to cross over the smaller borders in this life and see interconnectedness to each other.”<sup>52</sup>

Groody grounds his thinking in four theological themes: 1) *Imago Dei*, “Image of God”; 2) *Verbum Dei*, “Word of God”; 3) *Missio Dei*, “Mission of God”; and 4) *Visio Dei*, “Vision of God”. One way of situating his thought is to consider two of the themes (*Imago Dei* and *Missio Dei*) as focused on the human person, and designed to bolster and give irrefutable weight to the precept of Christian charity; and two of the themes (*Verbum Dei* and *Visio Dei*) as focused on God, and God’s presence and work in the world in a way that ultimately, in terms of humankind, makes for a global village and a resulting elimination of national borders. As stated, Groody makes passing mention of national sovereignty, only “theologically” to empty it of its validity quickly thereafter. What Groody says theologically is often wonderful. If only he would maintain that it is a *theological* perspective and not directly apply it to the political realm in simplistic and univocal fashion. It is fideism at its best. It is fideism at its worst.

Let us consider each of these themes, noticing how they work to eliminate any philosophical perspective.

1) ***Imago Dei***. Groody very quickly applies this first theological theme to the political realm. Quoting other theologians, he situates *Imago Dei* as the “the primary Christian category or symbol of interpretation of personal value”,<sup>53</sup> and “grounds further claims to human rights” and “gives rise to justice.”<sup>54</sup> Indeed, according to Groody, this theological theme, because it can and ought to be applied directly to the political realm, enables us to cross the “problem-person” divide. People are no longer considered “problems” (an erroneous representation on Groody’s part of the perspective of those who consider immigration laws to be legitimate) because all borders that oblige categorizing them as such (e.g. “illegal alien”) disappear. Groody practices fideism here in claiming that only by defining persons in terms of *Imago Dei* can we truly situate their humanity. In other words, there is no real philosophical consideration of human persons that allows us to give “adequate consideration of their humanity”.<sup>55</sup> He thus hides behind the fact that, in the light of *Imago Dei*, the distinction between legal immigrant and illegal immigrant is a non-distinction, and declares that to view an illegal alien as illegal is not, as considered by most, a simple socio-political fact based in reality, but is to view them erroneously as social and political problems. Persons who want to cross (any) national borders they may wish have a right to do so because they are *Imago Dei*. Groody claims that “without adequate consideration of the humanity of the migrant (which can only be done theologically in the light of *Imago Dei*), it is impossible to construct just policies ordered to the common good.” Taken to its (il)logical end, Groody cannot but conclude that “just policies ordered to the common good” no longer distinguish between legal and illegal immigrant. And thus, with Groody, political philosophy goes out the window, and through the front door come those, unknowingly, with perhaps the best of intentions, who set the stage for some sort of a theocracy.<sup>56,57</sup>

2) ***Verbum Dei***. Christ is the “Word of God” made flesh, and, according to Groody, the perfect realization of *Imago Dei*. If Word of God made flesh, Christ is actually more than the perfect realization of *Imago Dei*. Christ is not simply the perfect human being. According to most of the Christian tradition, Christ’s *being* is divine. He is God. And so, the following statements by Groody can be considered a departure from the Christian tradition, which he conveniently uses to substantiate an open-borders perspective:

“The Incarnation, as a border-crossing event, is a model of gratuitous self-giving through which God empties himself of everything but love, so that he can more fully identify with others, enter completely into their vulnerable condition, and accompany them in a profound act of divine-human solidarity. This gratuitous nature of the incarnation offers a different framework for evaluating human migration and questions some of the underlying premises of the debate. In crossing the borders that divide human beings from God, the *Verbum Dei* is a profound gift that makes profound demands on those who receive it.”<sup>58</sup>

The Incarnation is primarily an act of love, a “gratuitous self-giving”, as Groody says, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, assumes human nature, that is to say, takes humanity to Himself. However, in order to grant the mind some insight into what is considered revelation (which is the work of theology) — in this case, into the mystery of the Incarnation, Groody opts for a metaphor laden with false presuppositions. Instead of using a simpler metaphor such as a *gap* (and bridging a gap), which clearly illustrates the re-union wrought by God become human, Groody uses a *border*, which, for him, is a type of gap, one that unnecessarily and unnaturally separates. However, as stated earlier, although complex and sometimes even marked by injustice in their formation, national borders are natural because community is a natural phenomenon, and are not the result of sin, which border God crosses in the Incarnation and Redemption.

Groody then, in turn, based on the false presupposition that (national) borders are “artificial gaps”, creates a theological argument for open borders. He makes use of the resulting notion that “God crosses all borders” essentially to eliminate national borders. According to traditional Catholic (Christian) theology, in the mystery of the Incarnation God does, so to speak, “bridge the gap” between the divine and the human, and that caused by human refusal to love, traditionally known as “sin”. Groody states as much: “God, in Jesus, crosses the divide that exists between divine life and human life”.<sup>59</sup> And the Incarnation manifests that nothing can separate us from God. But it does not shed light on national borders and their crossing. God does not “migrate” to the human race, as Groody suggests.<sup>60</sup> The Incarnation is of an entirely different order, so unrelated to geography that the metaphor does not serve the theological purpose. Moreover, as suggested in the section on fideism, the Incarnation is a mystery that does not supplant the natural order. Groody suggests that the demands of divine love in the Incarnation, in the end, *do* supplant the natural order:

“It challenges especially those who exclude on the basis of superficial notions of private property, legal status, and personal or even national rights without any social, moral, or divine reference point, or any regard for the exigencies of distributive, contributive, and restorative justice that flow as a natural consequence from divine gratuity. The incarnation moves people beyond a narrow, self-serving identity into a greater identification with those considered ‘other’ in society, particularly those like migrants and refugees who are poor and regarded as insignificant.”<sup>61</sup>

Thus, when Groody says “The *Verbum Dei* means that for God there are no borders that cannot be crossed, neither within himself nor in the created world”<sup>62</sup> he is being sufficiently vague as to confuse the issue: a) there are no borders within God, for God is perfectly one and “simple”, and b) God indeed “crosses all borders”, that is to say, nothing stops God. God’s transcendence of all borders and God’s ability to engage humanity in intimacy regardless of the obstacles, however, does not eliminate those borders that are natural, and amongst these are national borders.

**3) *Missio Dei*.** The “Mission of God” is the work of the *Verbum Dei* in and through the Church, in and through the Christian community. What is the mission and work of the *Verbum Dei*? “A central dimension of this mission is Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation, which deals largely with overcoming human constructions that divide the insider from the outsider, particularly those constructions generated by law in its various forms”.<sup>63</sup> For Groody, the mission of God is the restoration of the *Imago Dei*, which entails eliminating anything that humanly divides. Not all theologians would agree. The mission of God in the *Verbum Dei* in the New Covenant is more ambitious than this. The mission of God in the *Verbum Dei* in the New Covenant is to introduce humanity, that is to say, each of us, into intimacy even *greater* than that known by the *Imago Dei* in its natural unblemished splendor in “Eden” (symbol of humanity’s initial perfect harmony with God, prior to the “Fall” of our First Parents in humanity). This perspective more readily underscores that liberation theology insufficiently articulates the work of Christ and that what Groody purports, although somewhat accurate, falls short: “working against the forces of sin that disfigure the *Imago Dei*”.<sup>64</sup> Because Groody does not see this, and because for Groody grace supplants nature and faith supplants reason, the mission of God, as he defines it, ultimately overrides all human considerations in such a way as to suggest that they never really had any legitimacy or validity or substance, and such that, in the hierarchy of “laws”, a superior law can suppress an inferior law. Immigration law, for example, can readily be dismissed in the name of any one of three superior laws. According to Groody, the four “levels” of law are:

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- Divine law that expresses the Creator's will for all people;
- Natural law that deals with ethical dimensions of responding to those in need;
- Laws of human nature that lead people to seek opportunities for more dignified lives; and
- Laws of nations that control borders.

He, with facile disregard, concludes that "When people cross borders without proper documentation, most are not simply breaking civil laws but *obeying* the laws of human nature!"<sup>65</sup>

In striking contradistinction to the perspective of Fr. Groody stand, for example, the thoughts of Fr. Andrew McNair, Chaplain for the Office of Black Catholic Ministry of the Diocese of Providence. In a piece from September 26, 2008, entitled "Getting It Right On Immigration", Fr. McNair offered bold thoughts that seemingly do not toe the Roman Catholic hierarchical party line. The "Good Samaritan Catholics", whom he distinguishes from the "Pro-law Catholics", he says, are those who tend to think that "criminal prosecution and deportation do not offer a reasonable nor humane solution to the illegal immigration". And, as exemplified by Fr. Groody, they

"[C]ite the natural right to immigrate as the moral justification for breaking U.S. immigration laws. This natural right originates from the fact that God provides the world and all its resources to meet the needs of all human beings. The Church calls this moral principle the universal destination of goods. In light of this moral principle, the Good Samaritans argue that prosperous countries should admit economic refugees, even at some sacrifice to their own living standards. The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives some force to this argument by saying: 'The more prosperous nations are obliged to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him. (#2241).'"

Fr. McNair then proceeds to articulate the role of the common good in immigration law, and in this, rebuts the perspective of Fr. Groody:

"While this argument enjoys strong moral reasoning, it overlooks a higher moral principle that every nation must take into account: the Common good. The Pro-law Catholics based their position on this moral principle since the purpose of a just law is the common good. The Church recognizes every nation's legitimate responsibility to promote the common good by denying admission to certain migrants and regulating the flow of others'. The right to immigrate is not absolute. Catechism of the Catholic Church makes this clear: 'Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to immigrant's duties toward their country of adoption. (Ibid.)' The common good of any nation consists of three principles: respect for the person, social well-being and development, and peace. Illegal Immigration or a lax immigration policy walks over these principles . . . . Enforcing the law and asking people to obey the law isn't mean or heartless, but charity in its truest sense."

4) *Visio Dei*. As Groody states, "the vision of God is the goal of Christian life". In other words, faith is ordered to seeing God, to the Beatific Vision.<sup>66</sup> Groody takes this long-standing Christian doctrine and, with seeming deliberateness, articulates it in such vague fashion that the door be opened to the elimination of the natural order. "Christian discipleship, while situated within the citizenship of the patria of this world, ultimately is grounded in citizenship of, and movement toward, the patria of the next. In addition to pledging allegiance to a particular country, the visio Dei brings out that one's ultimate obedience is to God alone, which leads one beyond any national and political boundaries to ultimate fidelity to the kingdom of God."<sup>67</sup> As many bishops do, Groody pays lip-service to the body politic, only to reduce its autonomy to none, all in the name of the supposed social implications of the *Visio Dei*. The Christian's orientation to the Beatific Vision ought to impact his or her daily life. But Groody erroneously supposes that full impact eliminates the distinction between the divine order and the natural order.

Indeed, Groody ambiguously states that the kingdom that Christ proclaims, “the kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love, and peace, brings people into a different kind of social and ethical territory”<sup>68</sup> and that “the extent to which people cross borders in this life determines to what extent they will cross them in the next.”<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusion

It has been stated that “the road to Hell is paved with good intentions”. I believe that “the road to Heaven is paved with good intentions”. It is a matter of wanting. But good intentions and wanting do not suffice for sound leadership. The medieval mystic Teresa of Avila is said to have repeatedly urged that a good spiritual director, that is to say, one who can “lead” a soul to God, is to be *learned*.

Some may decry my presumption of good intentions as naïve or simplistic, but I choose to believe that the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church has the best of intentions in its statements on the issue of immigration. But leadership beckons wisdom. “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.”<sup>70</sup> Wisdom, in the case of immigration, ought to awaken Church leadership to the realization that the issue’s complexity is poorly served by a simplistic approach that negates the autonomy of the human mind. Those who lead the Church are indeed entrusted with the task of promoting divine love in the community. But divine love itself cannot and does not justify the non-conversation currently taking place in the Church on the issue of immigration. Indeed, “it is not good to have zeal without knowledge”.<sup>71</sup> And, as the Indian humanitarian and spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar articulates so well, “Love without wisdom is pain.”<sup>72</sup> Stifling healthy, respectful conversation on immigration in the name of divine love can only stunt the growth of divine love.

Like Fr. Groody, I too “seek to broaden the intellectual terrain about migration”. However, I do so acknowledging and hoping to promote the autonomy of the intellect. May we be able to continue the necessary conversations about this sensitive question, so that we may come to an understanding that truly respects all dimensions of life both human and divine. It is my wish that the Roman Catholic Church be respectful of its own understanding of human intellect, and not forsake its own patrimony. Thomas Aquinas, in his work *Summa Contra Gentiles*,<sup>73</sup> celebrates the autonomy of human intellect: “[A]lthough the truth of the Christian faith surpasses the capacity of the reason, nevertheless that truth that the human reason is naturally endowed to know cannot be opposed to the truth of the Christian faith.”<sup>74</sup> Let us hope that the Church, in the footsteps of Aquinas, do the same.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Catholic Church’s Position on Immigration Reform”, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, January 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Some will, of course, argue that a generous welcome of illegal immigrants serves the national community, causing it to grow in “humanity”: According to Daniel Groody, “A theology of migration is a way of speaking about the mission of the church within the context of a disordered political economy. It seeks to foster human dignity in the poor and vulnerable, to challenge any structures and systems of society that divide and dehumanize, and to uplift all efforts to build a more just and humane world. Reducing people to their legal or political status not only denies dignity to those in need but also dehumanizes those who have the opportunity to help. The Aga Khan, a former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from 1966–1978, once observed: ‘The awkward truth about human deprivation is that it demeans those who permit or ignore it more than it does those who are deprived.’ (Gil Loescher, “The PRS Project”, unpublished paper, presented at Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford University, November 22, 2007.) The question, then, is not whether to allow or restrict migration but whether our moral choices are creating divides that move us toward a globalization of polarity rather than toward a globalization of solidarity. In David Hollenbach’s words, ‘The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich. The freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful. The participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them.’ (David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*. New York: Paulist, 1979, p. 204.) Ignoring those in pain and building of walls of separation alienates people not only from each other but also from themselves.” Daniel Groody, “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 666.

<sup>3</sup> Galatians 3:28.

<sup>4</sup> “The Church’s Beacon Shines Brightly”, *The Catholic Review*, July 16, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> For a Christian, the faith perspective is obviously real world; but there remains the complexity of daily existence for which the Christian perspective offers no detailed guidelines — not to mention the additional complexity of its cohabitation with an array of perspectives.

<sup>6</sup> Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 664.

<sup>7</sup> Archdiocese of New York; The Gospel in the Digital Age (blog): “Immigration Reform”, April 27, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Sharon Otterman, “Cardinal Dolan Sets Agenda for Return to New York”, *The New York Times*, February 20 2012.

<sup>9</sup> Archdiocese of New York; The Gospel in the Digital Age (blog): “Immigration Reform”, April 27, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey”.

<sup>12</sup> The Interfaith Immigration Coalition, for example, states the following regarding “Comprehensive Immigration Reform”

“As our diverse faith traditions teach us to welcome our brothers and sisters with love and compassion— regardless of their place of birth—we call on Congress and the Administration to work together to enact humane and equitable immigration reform.

1. Comprehensive immigration reform should accomplish the following:
2. Uphold family unity as a priority of all immigration policies
3. Create a process for undocumented immigrants to earn their legal status and eventual citizenship
4. Protect all workers and provide efficient channels of entry for new migrant workers
5. Facilitate immigrant integration
6. Restore due process protections and reform detention policies
7. Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values”

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The Interfaith Immigration Coalition includes the following churches and religious organizations: African American Ministers in Action, AJC (American Jewish Committee), American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Church World Service (CWS), Disciples of Christ, The Episcopal Church, Franciscan Action Network, Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), Islamic Information Center, The Immigration Issues Offices of the Presbyterian Church USA, Interfaith Worker Justice (IWJ), Irish Apostolate USA, Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), Jesuit Refugee Service, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS), Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office, Muslim Public Affairs Committee, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, RAC (The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism), Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations (UUA), United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society, UNITED SIKHS.

<sup>13</sup> Steven A. Camarota, “Religious Leaders vs. Members: An Examination of Contrasting Views on Immigration”, Center for Immigration Studies *Background*, December 2009.

<sup>14</sup> 1,062,040 in 2011, according to “Table 1. Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status: Fiscal Years 1820 to 2011”, in *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2011*, Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

<sup>15</sup> The title of Archbishop Gomez’s article says it all: “The Supreme Court’s immigration hearing: Human dignity not up for debate”.

<sup>16</sup> Jose H. Gomez, “The Supreme Court’s immigration hearing: Human dignity not up for debate”, *The Washington Post*, April 24, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> The document *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope. A Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States* was developed by the Committee on Migration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in collaboration with the Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (CEM). It was approved simultaneously by the full bodies of U.S. Catholic bishops and the Mexican bishops at their November 2002 General Meetings and has been authorized for publication in the United States.

<sup>18</sup> Heather Hahn and Linda Bloom, “Immigration policy divides churchgoers”, umc.org, May 27, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> “The Church’s Beacon Shines Brightly”, the Archdiocese of Baltimore, July 17, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien, “Immigration a Test of Faith”, *Catholic Review*, February 25, 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 667.

<sup>22</sup> Galatians 3:28.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25.

<sup>24</sup> United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope”, a Pastoral Letter Concerning Migration from the Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States”, 2003.

<sup>25</sup> James Hoffmeier, “The Immigration Crisis: Immigrants, Aliens, and the Bible”. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Publishers, 2009.

<sup>26</sup> “Instructions on Certain Aspects of “Theology of Liberation”, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 1984, Introduction

<sup>27</sup> Instructions on Certain Aspects of “Theology of Liberation”, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 1984 IV Biblical Foundations, 12 & 13

<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the Roman Catholic Bishops propose a single political policy as suited to immigration.

<sup>29</sup> Understood: properly spiritual or properly divine.

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<sup>30</sup> Instructions on Certain Aspects of “Theology of Liberation” — Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 1984 IX The Theological Application of this core 3, 4, 5, 7.

<sup>31</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Book One, Part One.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Prima Pars, question 1, article 8, reply to objection 2.

<sup>33</sup> New Advent, “Summa Theologica”.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Prima Pars, question 2, article 8, reply to objection 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, reply to objection 1.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Prima Pars, question 62, article 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> “Reason and Belief in God,” in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God*, 1983, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press

<sup>39</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Chapter Two: “You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”; Seventh Commandment: “You Shall Not Steal”; II: Respect for Persons and their Goods, #2411: “Contracts are subject to commutative justice which regulates exchanges between persons and between institutions in accordance with a strict respect for their rights. Commutative justice obliges strictly; it requires safeguarding property rights, paying debts, and fulfilling obligations freely contracted. Without commutative justice, no other form of justice is possible.”

“One distinguishes commutative justice from legal justice which concerns what the citizen owes in fairness to the community, and from distributive justice which regulates what the community owes its citizens in proportion to their contributions and needs.”

<sup>40</sup> Pope John-Paul II, *Fidei Depositum*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, October 11, 1992

<sup>41</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Libreria Editrice Vaticana; Chapter Two: “You Shall Love Your Neighbor as Yourself”: Fourth Commandment: “Honor Your Mother and Father”; V: The Authorities in Civil Society, the duties of citizens; #2241: “The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.”

“Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants’ duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

<sup>42</sup> David Espo, “Senate Panel Approves Sweeping Immigration Bill”, *The State* (SC), March 28, 2006.

<sup>43</sup> Daniel Groody, “A Theology of Immigration”, *Notre Dame Magazine*, Autumn 2004.

<sup>44</sup> In the L’Arche community, Brussels, Belgium.

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 11:28.

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<sup>46</sup> “A Theology of Immigration”, *op. cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Unlike what Groody says, the nation is not simply an economic reality, which, as such, can always be overridden for greater humanitarian reasons. It is a *cultural* reality which, in the order of charity, takes precedence over other communities. Thomas Aquinas himself, considered a primary reference in Roman Catholic theology, states, “In matters concerning relations between citizens, we should prefer our fellow citizens.” (Summa Theologica II-II, Q. 26, “Of the order of charity”, art. 8, respondeo.) Groody thinks differently: “A theology of migration fosters a systematic framework that not only safeguards “negative” civil-political liberties central to human rights discourse (such as the right not to be tortured or killed), but also advocates for “positive” economic, social, and cultural rights (such as the right to work, to shelter, to family unity, and even to migrate) that are at the heart of Catholic social teaching and promote correlative duties that flow from human dignity.” Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 666.

<sup>48</sup> “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 667

<sup>49</sup> Archbishop Edwin F. O’Brien, “Immigration a Test of Faith”, *Catholic Review*. February 25, 2011.

<sup>50</sup> “A Theology of Immigration”, *op. cit.* The scriptural citation is from Deuteronomy 10:19. Groody, of course, suggests a simplistic interpretation that eliminates the aforementioned Old Testament distinction between resident alien and foreigner.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 664

<sup>52</sup> “A Theology of Immigration”, *op. cit.*

<sup>53</sup> Lisa Sowle Cahill, “Toward a Christian Theory of Human Rights”, *Journal of Religious Ethics* 8 (1980) 279.

<sup>54</sup> Mary Catherine Hilkert, “Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God”, in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. Ann O’Hara Graff. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1995, pp. 190–204.

<sup>55</sup> By consequence, anyone not familiar with Christian theology is unable truly to understand humanity.

<sup>56</sup> “A form of civil government in which God himself is recognized as the head. The laws of the commonwealth are the commandments of God, and they are promulgated and expounded by the accredited representatives of the invisible Deity, real or supposed — generally a priesthood.” Driscoll, J.F. (1912). “Theocracy”, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved August 20, 2012, from New Advent.

<sup>57</sup> Groody indeed seeks to substantiate his claims by including in the notion of *Imago Dei* that of human dignity that gives people a quasi-absolute right to migrate freely in search of a better life, and that of relationship (derived from God as triune, and thus relational), which, by the way, underscores the beauty of immigrants seeking work abroad so to be able to send remittances to their home countries.

<sup>58</sup> *Theological Studies* 70 (2009) “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, p. 652.

<sup>59</sup> CMSM Forum, Fall 2009, “Dying to Live: Theology, Migration, and the Human Journey”.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 650.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 650.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 653.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 645.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 656.

<sup>66</sup> “The immediate knowledge of God which the angelic spirits and the souls of the just enjoy in Heaven. It is called ‘vision’ to distinguish it from the mediate knowledge of God which the human mind may attain in the present life. And since in beholding God face to face the created intelligence finds perfect happiness, the vision is termed ‘beatific.’” Pace, E. (1907), “Beatific Vision”, in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved August 20, 2012, from New Advent.

<sup>67</sup> Daniel G. Groody, C.S.C., “Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees”, *Theological Studies* 70 (2009), p. 660.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 661.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 663.

<sup>70</sup> Proverbs 24:3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Proverbs 19:2.

<sup>72</sup> Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, “Love with wisdom is bliss. Love without knowledge or wisdom is pain”.

<sup>73</sup> Considered by some to be a “missionary’s manual”, traditionally dated to 1264, which considers the relationship of the intellect to Christian revelation.

<sup>74</sup> Chapter 7, question: “That the Truth of Reason Is Not Opposed to the Truth of the Christian Faith”, 1.



## What Are They Thinking? A Look at Roman Catholic “Doctrine” on Immigration

By Dominique Peridans

It takes little effort to notice and to conclude that the Roman Catholic Church has, in the past few years, intensified its lobbying on behalf of immigrants and thus has intensified its lobbying on behalf of “comprehensive immigration reform”. Indeed, it can be argued that “comprehensive immigration reform”, as envisioned by the Church and by those who stand in agreement with her, is designed primarily to benefit immigrants, especially *illegal* immigrants, more than it is designed to benefit the current national population.

The Church’s lobbying stems from, dare I say, an erroneous application, in the political sphere, of the Christian perspective on immigration. The Christian perspective on immigration makes no distinction between legal and illegal. Actually, allow me to be more precise: the Christian perspective on *immigrants* makes no distinction between legal and illegal. The Christian perspective on immigrants makes no distinction between legal and illegal because the Christian perspective *per se* does not see “immigrant” but sees “child of God”.

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