



# “Hunger is a terrible force,” Mexican migrant José Salvador explains.

After being deported from the United States for entering the country without legal documents, the former farmer is again preparing to cross the Mexican desert into the United States to look for work.

“It’s hard to even make enough money at home to buy them shoes,” he says of his four children, who have stayed in Mexico. “Imagine the difference between making less than \$6 a day with a pretty decent job and making \$50 a day in the U.S. Even if people could make \$14 a day they would stay (in Mexico).”

If he gets to Arizona, José will be among more than 6 million Mexicans living in the United States without legal documents. That’s more than half of the 11 million undocumented workers living in the U.S., according to a 2005 report from the Pew Hispanic Center. Still, José is haunted by memories of his last desert crossing, of the hunger and thirst and of encountering the corpse of another migrant.

## Upholding dignity and the common good

In order to address the human rights issues that accompany such wide-scale and dangerous migration, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) are calling upon the United States to reform U.S. migration policy as well as tackle poverty at its root through fair trade, foreign assistance increases and debt forgiveness (see sidebar).

“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,” the U.S. and Mexican Bishops wrote in their 2003 Statement, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*. “In this context, work that provides a just, living wage is a basic human need.”

In their statement the Bishops also acknowledge that people who cannot find work in their own countries have a right to migrate.

“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 from enforcement officers from both receiving and transit countries. Government policies that respect the basic human rights of the undocumented are necessary,” the Bishops said in the statement.

## *A call for just policies on global poverty and migration*

**The Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty seeks to end global poverty through reforms in:**

- Trade:** Shaping U.S. trade policies so that overcoming poverty and promoting human development are central priorities.
- Aid:** Supporting effective programs that foster long-term development and empowerment of the poor.
- Debt:** Eliminating the debt of the poorest countries in ways that reduce poverty and promote human dignity.

**The Justice for Immigrants Campaign seeks the following changes in U.S. immigration policy:**

1. A path to citizenship and earned legalization process for undocumented workers currently in the United States.
2. Reform of our family-based immigration system to allow family members to reunite with loved ones in the United States in a timely manner.
3. Reform of the employment-based immigration system to provide legal pathways for migrants to come and work in a safe, humane, and orderly manner.
4. An end to the border "blockade" enforcement strategy.
5. Restoration of due process protections for immigrants.

## Migrants struggle to meet basic needs

Unable to obtain visas and permits to enter the U.S. legally, many migrants from Mexico in recent years have entered the U.S. without documents. They are drawn by a ready supply of U.S. jobs in areas such as agriculture, construction, and restaurant work, which rely on the immigrant work force. Low paying by U.S. standards, the work draws unskilled Mexican workers, who send a total of \$8 billion to \$10 billion back to families in Mexico.

For generations Mexican workers have crossed back and forth between the United States and Mexico, mainly working seasonal jobs in agriculture. But in the last decade a financial crisis in Mexico, coupled with job losses that resulted from the sale of subsidized U.S. agricultural products, sold below the cost of production in Mexico, and the related impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada, have caused the number of Mexicans seeking better paying jobs in the United States to swell, even as the U.S. has made it more difficult for Mexicans to enter the country.

Meanwhile, as migrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries try more and more desperate measures to escape poverty by migrating to the United States, an increasingly tragic drama is unfolding. The trek is marked by extortion and abuse at the hands of both smugglers and officials all along the way. In 2005, nearly 500 people died in the desert seeking to cross the border into the U.S.

### CRS responds

In response to the crisis that surrounds such migration, CRS is working with local and regional partners to strengthen the economic prospects of people in Mexico so they don't have to migrate to escape poverty.

For example, CRS supports projects that provide direct support for workers and small farmers in Mexico, particularly those who have been most severely affected by forces of globalization, including recent trade agreements, and their impact on vulnerable sectors of society. CRS has brought Mexican and U.S. farmers together to develop strategies to respond to shared concerns in the current global market. It also supports partner efforts in Mexico and the region to advocate with their own governments for policies that address economic disparities that ultimately lead to migration.

Additionally, CRS supports programs that strive to prevent the increasing number of deaths in the desert and advocate for migrants' human rights. CRS also supports advocacy to secure more just and humane migrations policies in the Americas, and has worked to bring people together across borders to build solidarity, understanding and tolerance.

### What You Can Do:

- Learn about pending U.S. legislation on migration reform by visiting the Justice for Immigrants Campaign web page, [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org).
- Work to decrease poverty on a global scale through the Catholic Campaign Against Global Poverty. Visit [www.usccb.org/globalpoverty](http://www.usccb.org/globalpoverty) for more information.
- Receive regular updates and action alerts on both issues by joining CRS' legislative network. Visit [www.crs.org/legislativenetwork.cfm](http://www.crs.org/legislativenetwork.cfm).
- Pray for people throughout the world who are forced to leave homes and families in search of work that can sustain basic needs.
- Participate in the CRS Fair Trade program to help make the economy work for disadvantaged artisans and farmers around the world. Visit [www.crsfairtrade.org](http://www.crsfairtrade.org) for more information.
- Visit the CRS Campus Connection website—<http://campus.crs.org>—for university and college student migration resources.
- For more information contact CRS at [advocacy@crs.org](mailto:advocacy@crs.org).

### *Prayer for our migrant brothers and sisters*

Loving and merciful heart of Jesus, I pray for my migrant brothers and sisters. Have mercy on them and protect them from mistreatment and humiliation in their travel.

They are identified by many as dangerous and poor because they are strangers. By the grace of God, let us respect and value their dignity.

Touch our hearts with your goodness, Lord, when we see them as they travel. Protect their families until they return home, not with a broken heart but with their hopes fulfilled.

Amen!

- From the Catholic Parish in Altar, Mexico



**A Catholic Campaign  
Against Global Poverty**

