

## How to Prepare and Respond

### **Accompaniment of Immigrants in your Community**

- Volunteer and/or attend information trainings sponsored by immigrant rights organizations in your community and/or at your local Catholic Charities agency (see this [link](#).) Ask how you can help. If you cannot find these in your area, email the Mercy Justice Team at [justice@sistersofmercy.org](mailto:justice@sistersofmercy.org)
- Organize or attend a session in your parish (or place of residence) to discern what you can do to assure immigrant members of your support and to make a plan for how your community can respond. Fear among immigrants is heightened, and any gestures of support go a long way. If your parish has not yet been engaged in immigrant support, encourage the pastor and parish staff to be in touch with the [U.S. Bishops' Conference Justice for Immigrants campaign](#), of which the Sisters of Mercy are a member group. See their resource page: [You Are Not Alone](#). Ask your pastor to speak to these concerns in a homily. Give him the Special Message issued by the [U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops](#) (USCCB) at their assembly last November, in which the bishops addressed the vilification of immigrants and the harmful enforcement policies being carried out.
- Collect and distribute resources for immigrants, including “Know Your Rights” information, where to find legal help, resources for developing a plan for mixed-status families, etc. These can be included in church bulletins, or schools can provide such resources for parents. Every immigrant family needs to gather documents and formalize a plan (see resources [here](#).) Organize or promote a Know Your Rights workshop, taking care to focus outreach to where immigrants gather and where safety can be ensured. Immigrants are living with a high level of fear, and promoting such an event via mass media could [draw threats](#) to those in attendance.
- If you work directly with immigrants, help may be needed to get passports for children (in preparation for cases in which a parent is at risk of being deported and wants the child to go with them). If you work at a school with immigrant students, make a plan for responding if parents of your students are apprehended. Trauma counseling may be needed, as well as ensuring the care of children in the home. See Mercy web resources for schools [here](#).
- Be vigilant. Join with others in your local town and find out if your mayor or police department plan to cooperate with ICE enforcement to arrest or hold immigrants in local jails while being processed for deportation. Officials in some states are actively looking for ways to help in the deportation process.
- Set up or join a local emergency response network. If you do not find an immigrant rights' organization locally that is conducting trainings to prepare for ICE activity in your area, see this [resource](#).

## Prophetic Public Witness and Advocacy in Defense of Immigrants:

- Join with other Catholics in a [Season of Faithful Witness / Catholics in Communion](#). This initiative, formally launched on Ash Wednesday, seeks to support immigrants as well as individuals and families under increased strain, fear, and uncertainty by promoting prayerful and peaceful acts of public witness rooted in our Catholic tradition. See a host of resources on the website and sign up to be connected to other interested Catholics in your area. If you are already engaged in prayer vigils, upload your event on the website to demonstrate the breadth of Catholic engagement.
- Organize a meeting with your local bishop and invite other religious and lay Catholic leaders to participate. Ask him to speak out in defense of immigrants, to participate in a local prayer vigil, and/or issue a statement or letter and urge pastors to share it. Share the [Special Message by USCCB](#), as well as this link to [other bishops' statements](#). Staff resources are available to assist bishops in drafting public statements in support of immigrants and/or organize diocese-wide convenings through the [Catholic Impact Prophetic Action Project](#) (Catholic IMMpact) co-sponsored by Hope Border Institute and Center for Migration Studies. He can email [info@catholicimpact.org](mailto:info@catholicimpact.org) to request resourcing from Catholic IMMpact.
- *Congressional advocacy*: If you are not already receiving Mercy Justice “Action Alerts,” you can sign up [here](#). While the Executive Branch has much power to enact practices around border control and immigration enforcement in the interior, Congress plays a key role since all of this will cost money.
- *Speaking out publicly*: Voices of Mercy and compassion need to be elevated in the public square, both to inspire others with gospel values and to expose the inhumanity of mass deportations, as well as to put elected officials on notice that the faith community will challenge cruel deportation efforts. This may include writing letters to the editor or submitting opinion pieces to your local news outlet, participating in prayer vigils outside legislators’ offices and inviting the local media to come, using social media, etc. Key talking points: instead of the administration’s claims of targeting criminals for deportation, its cruel and deadly detention and deportation policies are instilling fear in communities, violating basic rights, tearing families apart, and adversely affecting children. There will also be huge economic costs.
- *Changing the anti-immigrant narrative*: We need to educate others on why people flee their countries and seek entry to the U.S. and on the failure of Congress to pass comprehensive immigration policies that would enable people to legalize their status. We need to call out anti-immigrant, racist rhetoric – including “blaming the victims” (that is, immigrants) – and shine a light on how U.S. foreign policies have contributed to the poverty and violence in their countries, the very reasons why people have had to flee for their lives.
- Challenge the purchase of warehouses happening across the country to enable the mass detention of immigrants. See this [Detention Watch Network tool kit](#), and other resources on their [web site](#).