

Bumper-Sticker Ethics?

In the recent Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Benedict XVI invites us to advance the new evangelization in the context of migration by “seeking ways of fraternal sharing and respectful proclamation, overcoming opposition and nationalism. For their part, the Churches of origin, of transit and those that welcome the migration flows should find ways to increase their cooperation for the benefit of those who depart and those who arrive, and, in any case, of those who, on their journey, stand in need of encountering the merciful face of Christ in the welcome given to one’s neighbor.”

Here in our Archdiocese, our Church answers the Pope’s call by assuming responsibility as a Church of “welcome.” For many migrants who live, worship, work and study among us, whether documented or undocumented, ours is the face of Christ. Yet when it comes to anyone living among us illegally, some, including faithful Catholics, distort that face with a mask of distrust and hard-heartedness.

The ability of Maryland Catholics to put the call of their faith before their politics will be greatly tested when the so-called Maryland DREAM Act appears on the ballot of next November’s general election. The Act allows some immigrant children living in Maryland, who were brought here illegally by their parents, to pay in-state tuition at public colleges. The law was petitioned to referendum earlier this year after it was enacted by the state legislature a few months earlier.

Of course there is much more to it than *illegal* immigrants getting “special treatment” or “discounted” tuition - the overly-simplistic and misleading bottom line opponents of the Act proclaim to voters. The details, they’d argue, aren’t necessary to know. No, all one need to hear is *illegal*, right? After all, anything else is irrelevant. Never mind that:

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