

Immigration column was misguided

Father Rickle's column on Hispanics (CR, Sept. 25) failed to note some important points.

Most Americans are not against Hispanics per se, but only against Hispanics who come here illegally. To imply that these Americans are racist is unacceptable.

Father Rickle seeks to equate legal Italian immigrants who came here around 1900 with the illegal Hispanic immigrants of today. He labels both as "undocumented," but that is false. As he himself recognizes, the Italians were processed at Ellis Island, where they were screened for serious health and criminal problems. The illegal immigrants coming here today are not so screened.

Father Rickle uses the oft-cited quote from Leviticus: "treat the foreigner the same as a native ... Remember that you were once foreigners in Egypt." He conveniently omits the fact that when the Israelites settled in Egypt, they did so only after being interviewed and granted permission by the Pharaoh. (Genesis 47:1-6).

Father Rickle quotes Benjamin Franklin in an attempt to show that German immigrants of the 18th century were looked down upon. Actually, the Pennsylvanians of that time welcomed German immigrants. As historian T. J. Wertenbaker writes, "The industrious peasants and craftsmen from the Palatinate ...considered themselves fortunate indeed to have found a land where their earnings were not confiscated and their worship was undisturbed." (See *The Middle Colonies*, pp. 218, 219).

Such carelessness by an ordinary commentator might be overlooked. But Father Rickle is both a priest and an academic and I expected more.