

# Thy Perfect Light

## The Catholic Review

Last Tuesday, the Vatican officially recognized the Epiphany of the Lord, or Three Kings Day, with Pope Benedict XVI celebrating the Feast (moved to the previous Sunday in Baltimore and many local Churches throughout the world) which marks the visit of the Magi who followed a star to a manger in Bethlehem in pursuit of the promise and hope of the newborn Savior.

Fittingly, in the days that follow the Epiphany each year, Catholics in the United States recognize similar journeys made by modern-day peoples whose pursuits mirror those of the “Three Kings.” The observance of National Migration Week, whose theme this year is “Renewing Hope, Seeking Justice,” began 25 years ago by the U.S. bishops “to be a moment for Catholics to take stock of the wide diversity of the Church...”

With a new administration and a new Congress preparing to take office, our elected officials will once again be faced with fixing a broken immigration system in our country. The impact of the current system on families has been a particular focus of the Bishops and was addressed by Pope Benedict XVI in his in-flight press conference on his way to the United States. “...I have seen the breadth of this problem, especially the serious problem of the break-up of families...it appears that families should be protected rather than destroyed. What can be done should be done”.

My op-ed piece in the Jan. 5 Baltimore Sun (below) focused on the impact of our country’s current immigration policies on the dignity of the human person and the welfare of families. The responses, so far, have been mostly favorable and included many good questions about the Church’s position on this complex issue which are addressed in four documents produced by the Maryland-serving bishops and which are located on the Maryland Catholic Conference website, [www.mdcathcon.org/immigration](http://www.mdcathcon.org/immigration). The U.S. Bishops will continue to work with government leaders toward addressing the issue in a humane and comprehensive

way. I ask for your prayers for this effort, for our nation, and for all who leave their homelands in search of justice and hope following the example of the Magi some 2,000 ago.

If the presidential election was a tutorial in American politics and the national and international policy challenges of the still-new millennium, it failed to provide instruction in one of the nation's most neuralgic problems: What to do about the estimated 12 million people who are in the country illegally.

Both President-elect Barack Obama and Sen. John McCain supported reform legislation that included a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, a temporary guest-worker program to admit future immigrants, and tougher border and workplace enforcement.

Yet the issue was not discussed at any of the three presidential debates, and only rarely in other forums.

It is unclear where the issue will fall among the incoming administration's priorities. It should be near the top, if for no other reason than to provide some just resolution to a public debate that is dangerously corrosive and will only worsen with inaction.

Why, you may be asking yourself, is a Catholic archbishop concerning himself with the issue of immigration?

It's simple. Among my primary concerns as shepherd of the Archdiocese of Baltimore are the dignity of the human person and the welfare of families. These concerns are intimately connected with immigration – legal and otherwise – and so it necessarily demands my attention.

More parochially, it's also an issue that has demonstrably impacted the people I am called to serve.

It is a sad acknowledgment that frustration over immigration has turned heated, and even uncharitable, at some of our churches. Meanwhile, a number of the 45 undocumented immigrants arrested in a June raid in Annapolis were members of our parishes.