

# Welcoming Christ in the Migrant

WASHINGTON (CNS) — “Welcoming Christ in the Migrant” is the theme of the U.S. Catholic Church’s National Migration Week Jan. 7-13.

“I invite you to welcome Christ in the migrant through prayer, education and parish outreach,” said Bishop Gerald R. Barnes of San Bernardino, Calif., chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Migration.

He said Jesus’ biblical admonition that what one does to a stranger is done to him “is particularly timely” in the current immigration debate.

“Our nation’s legitimate security concerns have been distorted by some who would foment anxiety, fear and a distrust of migrants,” he wrote in a letter accompanying parish educational materials for this year’s migration week.

“The present immigration reform debate has lost much of its reason and is often being fueled by raw emotions,” he added.

He urged Catholics to become involved in the Catholic immigration reform initiative described on the Web site [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org).

The National Migration Week poster distributed by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops features an icon of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt alongside a photo of a young Latino couple with a baby riding on a bus or train.

“Scriptures and Catholic social teaching call upon all of us to examine the issues and respond to the strangers among us as we would to Jesus himself,” Bishop Barnes wrote.

“The Holy Family found safety and new lives in Egypt during their time of great need,” he said. “Many migrants today follow similar paths as they embark on their journey of hope.”

Offering aid and comfort to America’s newcomers “is not only our Christian duty but a privilege,” he said.