



Capitol Comments: Full of Grace

By Jennifer Allmon, Associate Director, Texas Catholic Conference

As a new mom, I have come to marvel at the grace of Mary. As I prepared for labor, I found myself reflecting on Mary's sacrifices. I remembered a conversation with a dear friend who happens to be a non-Catholic. I was surprised one day to see that she created the most beautiful Our Lady of Guadalupe in sidewalk chalk on her back deck. When I asked her if she was a closet Catholic, she replied, "Hey, I admire Mary not just because God chose her to carry Jesus, but also because she rode through the desert on the back of a camel during labor. That commands the respect of all mothers." As the Feast of the Immaculate Conception approaches, it is easy to see that Mary serves as a model not only to mothers, but to all. While none of us has the advantage of being born without sin, we can strive and pray for her grace.

I've been thinking about that conversation lately as we urge Congress to enact comprehensive immigration reform, especially as Christmas approaches. Joseph and Mary had the courage to flee their home and cross a border to protect their child. Thousands of modern families around the world make this same choice to flee and globally and they are often met with disdain. Yet the Church supports the right of people to migrate to support their families. Do we as individuals and families show compassion to these struggling families? Do we see Mary and Joseph in them and their struggles to protect their families? Furthermore, are we able to see the value in learning from the strong family values that our immigrant brothers and sisters have to share?

At the local level, there are pregnancy care centers throughout the state of Texas that recently lost funding for their work with undocumented expectant families. What better way to honor Mary this year than to make a donation to these pregnancy programs. Like the innkeeper who offered the stable, they welcome God's children every day. Contact your local Catholic Charities or diocesan Respect Life program to find a local center.

Nationally, you have the opportunity to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Our flawed immigration system divides families based on citizenship status. The Bishops will be asking that our nation's immigration system be repaired by passing immigration reform legislation. They will be supporting policies that: keep immigrant families together, adopt smart and humane enforcement policies, and ensure that immigrants without legal status register with the government and begin a path toward citizenship. For more information on the Church's teaching on immigration reform or to add your voice to the advocacy, visit www.JusticeForImmigrants.org.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. This year at Christmas, may the Lord be with us and grant us a fraction of your grace that we may welcome the strangers among us and meet Christ in them. We pray also that when we are strangers, we will find welcome and meet Christ in those receiving us.