



Welcoming the Stranger: Why Catholic Charities Helps Immigrants and Refugees

As people of faith, we are called to help people in need, just like the Good Samaritan did for the man he found by the side of the road.

- Migration is a reality – now and throughout recorded time. In a joint pastoral statement, the Catholic bishops of the United States and Mexico observed that “America is a continent born of immigrant peoples who came to inhabit these lands and who from north to south gave birth to new civilizations. ...we share in the concern of religious and social service providers who, without violating civil law, attempt to respond to the migrant knocking at the door.”
- Jesus was a refugee and an immigrant; his family was forced to rely on the kindness of strangers as they fled their homeland for safety or moved to new lands.
- The moral imperative to help immigrants and refugees is shared across the interfaith community: Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Jewish, or Muslim.
- Catholic Charities programs are guided by Catholic Social Teaching: the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.

Catholic Charities has a history of service to immigrants and refugees.

- Catholic Charities serves immigrants and refugees because the teaching of our faith compels us to help those in need. We are providing humanitarian assistance.
- Catholic Charities follows the rule of law when helping someone – all of our programs specifically serving immigrants and refugees are authorized and funded by the government. We do not ever advise anyone to break or not comply with U.S. immigration laws.
- When someone comes to us for help, we respond as Jesus taught us: to provide help to people in need.
- Our programs that help refugees were started decades ago and have spanned many administrations and political climates. Refugee Resettlement was launched in 1975; the St. Frances Cabrini Center for Immigration Legal Services launched in 1980.

We serve immigrants and refugees through a variety of life-changing programs.

Refugee Resettlement Program

- Families and individuals who were screened and authorized to come to the U.S. receive support to build new lives of self-sufficiency in Houston
- This program is offered in partnership with Migrant and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

St. Frances Cabrini Center for Immigration Legal Services

- Private funding, client fees and federal grants enable Catholic Charities attorneys to help immigrants seeking legal relief for which they are eligible under U.S. immigration laws, such as permanent residency or U.S. citizenship

Houston Transfer Center

- A brief rest stop for migrant families who are authorized to travel in the U.S. to unite with their sponsors while they wait for their date in immigration court; migrants have been processed by the U.S. government before coming to the center
- Provides assistance with transportation, meals and a hotel room where a family can shower and rest before catching a flight or bus to their sponsor

St. Michael's Home for Children

- Migrant children who arrived with no guardians are placed in Catholic Charities' care by federal immigration authorities while waiting to be reunited with family members

St. Jerome Emiliani Foster Care Program

- The US Government places refugee and some immigrant youth who arrived with no guardians in the care of Catholic Charities, and we become their legal guardians. Foster parents, carefully screened and vetted by Catholic Charities, provide these youth with nurturing homes.
- This program is offered in partnership with Migrant and Refugee Services of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

There are many myths about our service to migrants and refugees. Here are a few.

- *Catholic Charities contributes to illegal immigration by offering free services that encourage migrants to cross the border.*
 - We are here to help wherever help is needed. If someone tells us they're hungry, we don't first ask if they're here legally before we provide them with food. We respond like the Good Samaritan, who offered help without question because the need existed.

- *Catholic Charities is involved in trafficking illegal immigrants.*

OR

- *Catholic Charities actively helps migrants cross the border illegally.*
 - This is simply false. Catholic Charities plays no role in transporting migrants across the U.S. border. We help people who have already entered the country who come to us needing humanitarian assistance.
 - In fact, we have programs designed to help those who have been victimized by human trafficking. We provide legal services, counseling, and food and financial assistance to help them recover from their trauma.

- *Refugees are a drain on society and end up on welfare.*
 - Refugees arrive in America with nothing. They're highly motivated to find employment. They only get six months of guaranteed federal refugee financial assistance. A Migration Policy Institute study found that the proportion of refugee men working was seven percentage points higher than among their U.S.-born counterparts.
 - The Refugee Resettlement Program helps refugees find jobs as soon as they receive government work authorization documents. We place hundreds of refugees in jobs each year to help them on their journey to self-sufficiency.