



April 15, 2021

What Pope Francis can Teach Us about How to Respond to Migrants

~ by M.T. Davila, National Catholic Reporter

Once again our attention is at the U.S. – Mexico border. Increased news media attention to the situation of minors in immigration detention centers highlights challenges brought on by new waves of people, many of them unaccompanied minors, seeking to escape profound violence and the ongoing impacts of natural disasters and the pandemic at home.

President Joe Biden has assigned a new role to Vice President Kamala Harris to oversee conditions at the border and to engage in diplomatic efforts with nations of origin to understand the major push factors leading migrants to undertake a perilous journey to the U.S. Her responsibilities include shaping diplomacy and coordinating aid efforts to more effectively address the situation.

Welcome, protect, promote, integrate. Under Pope Francis these four verbs have become the rubric shaping pastoral, ethical and political recommendations for responses to migrations globally that faithfully witness to Christian discipleship and respect the human dignity of peoples on the move.

The vulnerability of migrants, and the responsibility of receiving nations to tend to them, are privileged in Francis' most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*.

Altogether, migrants and their plight are mentioned over 30 times throughout the document, equal in concern only to the poor. Francis proposed that welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants are key markers of truly human fraternity and friendship. Because of this, the document could also be considered a treatise on welcoming the stranger, a map for nations and societies to better understand how to respond to this most critical sign of the times.



Migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. attempt to disembark from an inflatable raft with the help of a Texas Ranger officer on April 5, 2021, in Roma, Texas, after they crossed the Rio Grande from Mexico. (CNS/Go Nakamura, Reuters)

While every wave of migrants at the border is often presented by the media and political pundits as a crisis and a threat to our resources and security, our common humanity ought to ground our responses. *Fratelli Tutti* insists, “All individuals, whatever their origin, know that they are part of the greater human family, without which they will not be able to understand themselves fully. ...No one people, culture or individual can achieve everything on its own.”

Our current moment challenges us as to how best to respond to the call to welcome, protect, promote and integrate those who arrive at our borders seeking safety in a land not their own. Pope Francis asks us to recognize them not as usurpers of unearned goods, but as essential to the very fabric of who we are, a critical piece of our self-understanding, and contributors to the common good.

Biden’s language around this moment in our story of immigration echo some of the essential principles of Catholic Social Teaching. It is imperative that all the faithful in the U.S. carefully consider the map laid out for us by Pope Francis when considering how to transform a broken immigration system that makes vulnerable people, especially children, even more vulnerable.

To read the complete article, please click [here](#)

From the Guadalupe Province Vocation Team...

Religious Life Today Storymap site brings study results to life

The NRVC released its [Religious Life Today Storymap website](#) on March 25, giving members and the public a highly visual, compelling way to understand contemporary realities and trends among those joining religious orders. The site brings to life the data from the 2020 Study on Recent Vocations to Religious Life. You are invited to scroll through this hope-filled resource. The NRVC thanks the GHR Foundation for underwriting this project.

NRVC Executive Committee



Newly elected board members, to begin in Fall 2021



Board selects new chair, vice chairs, and members

At its March meeting, the [NRVC board](#) appointed a new chair and vice chairs, effective immediately, and selected four new members who will begin serving in the fall.

(See all of them [here](#).) The new executive committee now consists of **Sister Mindy**

Welding, I.H.M., chair; and vice

chairs **Father Adam MacDonald,**

S.V.D. and **Sister Belinda Monahan, O.S.B.,**

and **Sister Deborah Borneman, SS.C.M.** ex officio.

The new board members to begin serving in the fall are **Ms. Nancy Costello**, a former Region 3 NRVC coordinator who works in communications and vocations for the Cabrini Sisters; **Sister Nicole Trahan, F.M.I.**, who has published vocation related articles in *HORIZON* and elsewhere; **Sister Cheryl Wint, O.S.F.**, of the Hudson Valley Member Area, and **Sister Mary Yun, O.P.**, former coordinator of the West Coast Member Area. Congratulations to all, and warm thanks to **Sister Kristin Matthes, S.N.D.deN.**, who has completed her service as board chair.

At America's Door: How Nuns, Once Suspect, Won the Heart of Non-Catholic America

by Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans, *Global Sisters Report, Part I of the "At America's Door" series*

What a long, strange trip it's been.

Today, sisters all over the United States work with immigrants, teaching them English, advocating for humane treatment of workers who toil in factories and fields, defending the rights of undocumented families at the U.S. border fleeing hardship in Central America and elsewhere. In those roles, they attract relatively little notice. After all, isn't this what sisters are expected to do?



Experienced as nurses, religious sisters were in high demand during the Civil War, bringing domestic comfort to battlefield soldiers and starting to thaw an icy national reception to immigrant Catholics. This 1862 engraving by artist Winslow Homer depicts a sister offering a bedridden man in which a rosary figures prominently.

Smithsonian American Art Museum

But it wasn't always this way. Once, nuns, now well integrated into the fabric of American life, were seen as foreign invaders.

In the 19th century, immigrant nuns were viewed with profound hostility by members of the Protestant establishment. Ironically, that included a few famed abolitionists, such as Presbyterian pastor and American Temperance Society co-founder Lyman Beecher. At best, suggested some, the women were dupes of a clever group of priests and bishops determined to set up alternative (and competitive) systems of education and faith. At worst, they were suspected of owing allegiance to a foreign power headed by the covert figure of the pope.

The story of Catholic sisters' rise was that of American Catholicism writ large: immigrants confronted with suspicion and resentment who ultimately succeeded in not only integrating themselves into American culture but leaving an indelible mark on it.

A hostile beginning

But in the early 19th century, the signs that sisters, and Catholics themselves, would become a part of the fabric of national life didn't seem, particularly auspicious, suggested scholars of the period.

"A lot of the efforts to contain Catholicism have to do with immigrants coming to the United States into what is a very hostile culture and trying to maintain identities in communities that sometimes want them dead," said Hampton University (Virginia) assistant professor of history Michael Davis, noting that Catholic churches built in the 1830s and '40s in large cities resembled fortresses.

There is evidence that some sisters of the time were concerned about the danger that they might face when starting new missions on potentially hostile territory.

Protestant pushback

To suspicious Protestants, women religious were obvious stand-ins for Catholicism, said Margaret S. Thompson, an associate professor of history and political science at Syracuse University. “They are highly visible, there are more of them than priests, they wear habits, they look different which is highly suspicious, and they don’t marry. They give women options outside of marriage. So, in that sense, they are dangerous.”

Into epidemics, disasters and the Wild West

But as nuns began to found orders and missions across America, local communities were able to sort out myth from reality. Communities [reeling from epidemics](#) and other disasters recognized the sisters’ willingness to take on the difficult and often dangerous work of caring for the sick, sheltering orphans and helping the poor.

The antagonistic attitude changed fairly quickly, [said] Sr. Carol Higgins of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, once the sisters began to take care of locals afflicted by small pox. The Civil War, [nuns from a dozen orders were the only trained nurses](#) showed Americans of all faiths that sisters were willing to serve anyone, regardless of faith affiliation.

After the Civil War, sisters, who had established religious communities and offshoots across the United States, were instrumental in creating institutions, like hospitals. It didn’t take long for them to become central to American society.

It’s hard to accuse a ministering angel on a battlefield or a hospital nurse of sinister motives.

While hostility towards Catholics and the nuns who represented the faith ebbed, hostility towards immigrants persisted.

The Immigration Act of 1924 which set strict quotas on the number of immigrants allowed to enter America, may have had the consequence of limiting the number of sisters entering the country, but, it did not target them, said Thomas Rzeznik, a historian of American religion at Seton Hall University.

Once despised, even feared, orders founded by immigrants had won the hearts of a wary America by doing the work that needed to be done. They had arrived.



Arriving in New York City in 1889, Mother Cabrini, who had founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Italy in 1880, opened schools, orphanages and hospitals in the U.S for Italian immigrants.

To read the complete article please click [here](#)

At America's Door: Serving Those in the Shadows, Sisters Follow in Footsteps of Women Long Gone

by [Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans](#), *Global Sisters Report*, Part 2 of the "At America's Door" series

When it comes to helping immigrants, Catholic sisters are one of the few constants in a tempestuous American landscape often shaped by hostility and division.



A religion professor at LaSalle University, Philadelphia, Dr. Margaret McGuinness says American sisters have always had the same mission: to work with those on the margins.

Photo credit: GSR file photo/Dan Stockman

"They are invested in the marginalized and dispossessed," said Dr. Margaret McGuinness, a religious professor at LaSalle University in Philadelphia and author of [Called to Serve: A History of Nuns in America](#). "It's something rooted in their mission." She noted that many sisters were immigrants themselves. [Editor's note: Dr. McGuinness is a former faculty member at Cabrini University.]

Sisters have been active from coast to coast as national leaders have come and gone and as anti-immigrant sentiment has ebbed and flowed.

Congressional legislation addressing the status and rights of immigrants has passed and, in an increasingly polarized political environment, failed to pass.

The Trump administration was hotly criticized for its [draconian policies](#). But the months-old Biden team has recently [struggled to handle the surge](#), particularly among unaccompanied minors at the southern border.

The work of the sisters continues across geographical boundaries, noted McGuinness. In Texas, Missionary of Jesus Sr. [Norma Pimentel](#) works with new migrants in the Rio Grande Valley.

On another side of the country, in New York City's Lower East Side, [Cabrini Immigrant Services](#), founded by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, provides legal and social services to the city's immigrant community.

A charism spanning centuries

Nineteenth-and early 20th-century nuns, often immigrants themselves, had to counter anti-Catholic prejudice but were embraced in the end by a country that welcomed the hospitals, orphanages and schools sisters created, often in places where none had previously existed.



Now many sisters offer direct services or human rights advocacy for migrants and refugees who have become [targets of suspicion and disdain](#).

Persistent hostility to other cultures

Many sisters seem acutely aware of the hostility migrants can encounter, particularly those who are undocumented.

More than 30 years ago, Mercy Sisters JoAnn Persch and Patricia Murphy helped found Su Casa Catholic Worker Community in Chicago for Central American immigrants who had faced violence and oppression in their own countries.

“It was probably the hardest time of our lives, but we wouldn’t trade it for anything,” Persch said.

Veterans of years of vigils outside Broadview, an ICE detention facility in Chicago, Persch and Murphy have made trips to Washington, D.C., to engage in nonviolent protest for immigrant rights in the Capitol Rotunda — and have been arrested in the process.

Murphy and Persch, who fought for years to gain access to migrants in detention centers, have a motto: “We do it peacefully and respectfully. But we never take no for an answer.”

An evolution of partnerships

Now, sisters like Persch often collaborate, not only with other Christian groups, but with Jewish and Muslim organizations, as well. “We are all gathered around our belief that whatever faiths we have, we are challenged to welcome the stranger, to treat everyone like a child of God, with dignity and respect,” Persch said.

Instead of seeing each other as threats, Sr. Marie Lucey, of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, said, 21st century people of faith collaborate to help immigrants. “It’s a world of difference. We highly value our interfaith community. For those of us who work in the area of justice, we don’t get into our differences in theology. That’s not the focus.”

Whether they are lobbying Congress on behalf of DACA “Dreamers,” teaching English as a second language, or finding housing for immigrants released from ICE detention, sisters say that they are part of a bigger picture, one drawn by the women who arrived on these shores more than a century ago with the same dream. To read the full account please click [here](#)



Sister of Mercy JoAnn Persch addresses a rally to protest detention and to remember those children who died at the border. Sponsored by the Chicago Archdiocesan Office of Immigration, the rally was held at the Holy Family Parish peace garden in Chicago.

(Photo courtesy of Sr. JoAnn Persch)

If you enjoyed our recent
webinar series on immigration,
“Dreaming of a
Single Human Family”
we would like to invite you to
a follow-up conversation
via Zoom
on
Wednesday, April 28th

11:00 am EDT/10:00 am CDT/ 9:00 am MDT/ 8:00 am PDT

This will be an opportunity to exchange thoughts and ideas **with our distinguished presenters**, Cabrini colleagues and friends about what you learned during the webinar series; to discuss immigration practices and policies and learn more about how you can get involved with immigrant causes and reform.

We hope that many of you who were with us for the webinars will join us for this informal time of dialogue as we share:

- what were your ‘takeaways’ from the sessions?
- what lingering questions about immigration do you have?
- what do you think is necessary to bring about enduring and humane immigration reform?
- what courses of action regarding immigration have you been inspired to undertake?

Cabrini Conversation - Webinar Reflection

Time: Apr 28, 2021 10:00 AM Central Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87060938972?pwd=YkpucFV1R1RNU1JYUjZxRTRQcXdnZz09>

Meeting ID: 870 6093 8972

Passcode: 908189

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Meeting ID: 870 6093 8972

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kc8AHZf2Eh>



For a synopsis of each of the immigration webinars:

1 – Themes from the Life and Spirituality of Mother Cabrini – p.7

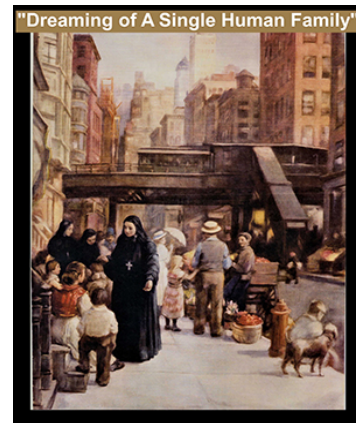
<https://www.mothercabrini.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/1.28.21-D-1.pdf>

2 – Challenges in Migration and a Cabrinian Response – p. 2

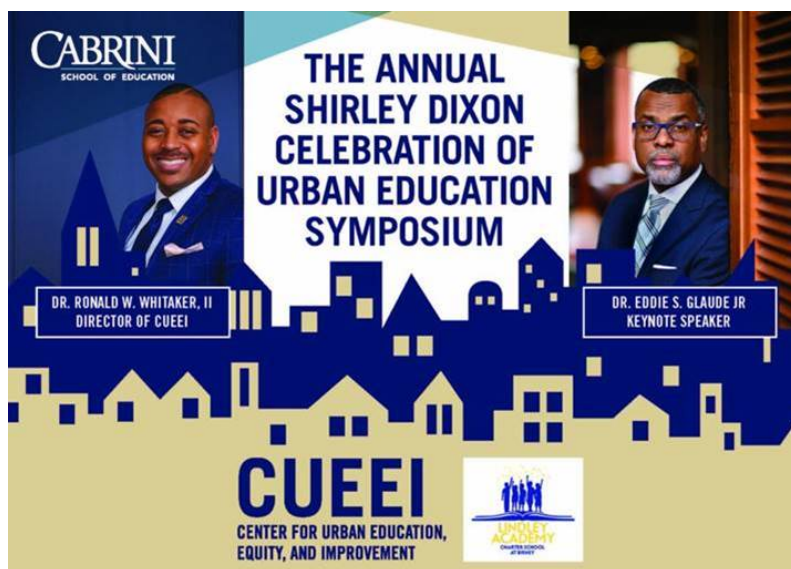
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10 - Immigration from the perspective of the Cabrinian charism – p.2

<https://www.mothercabrini.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/3.25.21.pdf>



The Center for Urban Education, Equity, and Improvement (CUEEI) invites you to join us on Thursday, April 22, for the annual Shirley Dixon Celebration of Urban Education Symposium



*Continue the legacy of
Dr. Shirley Dixon!
View diversity, equity, and
inclusion through ethical and
practical lenses, and navigate the
complexities of race and
democracy in America.*

Keynote Address:
Dr. Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.

Progressing Past the Value Gap
and the Lie in Education Spaces

Thursday, April 22, 2021

Virtual Reception | 5:45-6pm

Virtual Keynote Address and Awards Presentation | 6-7:30pm

Register Now!

WALK A MILE
WALK TO LEARN ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS
AND HOW WE CAN HELP

WHY WE WALK

It's time we open our eyes and see the victims of the sex trade, domestic servitude, and forced labor who've been in the shadows for far too long.

The purpose of the event is to shine a spotlight on the 27 million men, women, and children who are still trapped in slavery today.

It's happening right here in our community. Come out and learn more about the signs and how to help end trafficking in your zip code.

JOIN US

Register Here

Monday April 26, 2021

**Walk starts at 3:00 P.M. in front of Grace Hall
Please remember to wear a mask**



Donations of hotel size toiletries: soap, shampoo, toothpaste etc. We will also be accepting donations of gift cards to support the Cabrini Closet

**This walk is sponsored by ECC 200 Anti-Human Trafficking Class , the Cabrini Closet
Contact Karol Brewer at 610-902-1038 or cabriniformation@mothercabrini.org**

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A message from the NRVC: Missionary Sisters,



Author(s) Sister Deborah M. Borneman, SS.C.M.

Please plan
to
celebrate
**World Day
of Prayer
for
Vocations
on April 25**

Help us to celebrate World Day of Prayer for Vocations by emailing a photo of a member of your community praying for vocations! The NRVC will share these photos on Facebook and in other publications. The photo can be in any setting. Let's showcase the varied ways we pray as religious.

Email photos to debbiesscm@nrv.net. Please make sure you have the permission of the people in the photo (and if you are taking the photo with your phone, aim for images not less than 1920 X 1080 pixels). For more information about celebrating this annual day of prayer, visit our website at nrv.net.

Prayer Requests

A request for prayer

A Cabrini University employee requests prayers for her daughter who will be undergoing medical tests. Kindly keep this intention in your thoughts.

