On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration

A Good Day to you and to each of my esteemed listeners! Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition! Barbara McGuigan here, alive and always grateful to be with you each Tuesday! The way I look at it: if you're blessed enough to be an EWTN radio host, you're blessed enough! God's airwaves are open. Here are the numbers to call:

In North America call 1-800-585-9396
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Last week I heard a good-willed deacon give a sermon on illegal immigration. He asked, "What would Jesus do?" I want to address that approach, because there appears to be much confusion among good Catholics.

But may I first say that this topic is a complicated and very emotional one, as we know. In talking about it, we must all be charitable, honest and just. We must treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We must oppose any sort of racism from anyone, and any anti-Americanism, too.

Naturally, we must always "put on the mind of Christ"; but in an authentic way. Jesus is authentic. He never got caught up in false love or false compassion, which actually cripples real love and real compassion; and our culture is steeped in both.

John Zmirak said in his May 12 InsideCatholic.com article, "Fake Virtues Are Worse than Vices":

> Misguided compassion...is charity minus courage -- the courage to face the truth about other people, whose souls aren't passive clay for us to mold whenever we're feeling all "apostolic." And so on: Every perversion that has afflicted historic Christianity… can be traced to false attempts to practice faith, hope or charity *minus* justice, temperance, fortitude or prudence.

For example, in writing about the new Arizona law, to take effect at the end of July, which says law officers must check the immigration status of people they stop on a police matter, one archbishop called that "nativism." And one blogging cardinal called the Arizona law "retrogressive, mean-spirited,… useless" and "anti-immigrant" and likened it to Nazi and Communist "techniques." Such charges are preposterous and uncharitable.

Then, too, Barack Obama has claimed, "Now suddenly if you don't have your papers and you took your kid out to get ice cream, you're going to be harassed." What irresponsibility to say that! The truth is that only people stopped for some police matter would be checked – and anyway, since 1952, federal law has said: "Every alien, eighteen

years of age and over, shall at all times carry with him and have in his personal possession any certificate of alien registration or alien registration receipt card issued to him."

Now, of course, we must guard against any law enforcement abuses of the Arizona law, but that is the case with every other law already on the books.

Fr. Patrick Bascio, a Holy Ghost Father, just recently published a new book to help all of us to put on the mind of Christ regarding illegal immigration. His book is called *On the Immorality of Illegal Immigration*. I would like to share parts of his April 30 interview with Dexter Duggan at The Wanderer.

When asked why his book on the immorality of illegal immigration is needed, Fr. Bascio said:

> I believe that a book on the subject from a priest is badly needed. My experience is that there is universal belief on the part of the average Catholic Christian that since the American bishops have, at times, approved of the demonstrations [about illegal immigration] to the point of sometimes advising their priests to break the law and give illegals sanctuary, that this must be the official position of the Church.
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> However, the Vatican has made clear that although it wishes bishops to assist any immigrant with special care, since they are usually very poor and dislocated, it also has made clear that this assistance must always be within the laws of the host nation...
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> To aid and abet lawbreaking violates not only the civil law but all the teachings of the Church on that subject...This is not to say that there can never be a circumstance where assisting someone to avoid the law could have a moral basis, but surely that is the exception rather than the rule, especially in the situation where it is assisting America's poor to remain poor.

Brothers and sisters, when you live in a border state as my family does, these "complexities" seem insurmountable. I read an excellent article in *Our Sunday Visitor* on May 16th that carried an interview with Bishop John C. Wester of Salt Lake City. He was asked, "What don't the bishops understand about 'illegal?'" Why disrespect the rule of law? Bishop Wester explained:

> The U.S. Bishops and the teachings of the Catholic Church have consistently respected the right of the sovereign to control its borders, as well as the rule of civil law. However, the Church, along with other members of our democratic society, has the right to work to change laws which are believed to violate basic human dignity, dignity imbued by the Creator.

> In the case of immigration, the U.S. bishops believe that the broken U.S. immigration system contributes to the exploitation of migrant workers in the workplace; their abuse by ruthless smugglers; and their deaths in the desert as they seek to find work to support their families. They come illegally because there are insufficient visas under the current system to come legally. Our system contains only 5,000 permanent visas under the current system to come legally.

(Brothers and sisters, this figure of 5,000 is for "unskilled workers." The U.S. naturalized 743,715 legal immigrants last year which is only 0.25% of our population. It's easy to see the bias against the poor that Bishop Wester is referring to. The US could easily accommodate a number that is five times higher, such as 1.25% of total population, and the economy would benefit even more.)

Similarly, Fr. James Farfaglia of Corpus Christi writes that the main problem:

> …lies in the fact that so-called unskilled laborers, for the most part, are not allowed to enter into our country legally. This is where the real injustice lies. This is where the American bishops, the politicians and the mainstream media need to be focusing their attention. Let people come into our country, but legally, with their papers in order. Everything else is just smoke and mirrors.

Brothers and sisters, our great nation was built on immigration! We need immigration...but *legal* immigration! Keep in mind, we are approaching "demographic winter."

As the late, pioneering pro-life missionary Fr. Paul Marx always warned:

> Any country needs at least a 2.1 replacement birthrate. When people do not replace themselves by having one or two children or no children at all, you end up with a top-heavy society. You will have more people over the age of 65 than under the age of five. Who will support all of the elderly people?

Mary Ann Glendon, professor of law at Harvard, and former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, wrote in 2006 in *First Things*:

> Our 78.2 million baby boomers are fast approaching retirement age. Over the next 25 years, the age structure of the whole country will come to resemble that of "retirement states" like Florida, where a fifth of the population is already over 65. President Bush stressed the urgency of the situation in his 2006 State of the Union Address, warning that "the retirement of the baby-boom generation will put unprecedented strains on the federal government. By 2030, spending for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid alone will be almost 60% of the entire federal budget. And that will present future Congresses with impossible choices — staggering tax increases, immense deficits, or deep cuts in every category of spending."

> Although awareness of this impending demographic storm is beginning to sink in, policymakers in Europe and the United States tend to frame it only as a "welfare crisis." The falling birth rates that are fueling the welfare crisis, however, are symptomatic of a deeper crisis in beliefs and attitudes — a crisis involving changes in the meanings and values that people attribute to aging and mortality, sex and procreation, marriage, gender, parenthood, relations among the generations, and life itself...

Ambassador Glendon goes on to say this:

> If the United States is to develop realistic, wise, and humane immigration policies, it will need a much fuller and better-informed public discussion. At present, the public debate is too often dominated by immigration alarmists who tend to ignore both our need for replacement migration and the human situations of the men and women who seek opportunities in the United States. Meanwhile, pro-immigration advocates show insufficient attentiveness to the legitimate concerns of citizens, while some others seem to want the economic benefits of migrant labor while turning a blind eye to the toll that the present situation takes on migrants and their families.
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> In the current atmosphere, it is extremely difficult to sort out the legitimate concerns from the sinister ones. There is thus an urgent need to increase public awareness both of the case for migration and of the likely social costs (both to migrants and the host country) when large-scale migration is not accompanied by well-thought-out strategies for integrating migrant families into the life of the communities where they settle.
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> To devise effective strategies, it will be necessary to forthrightly confront the issue of legality...

And this is precisely what Bishop Wester spells out for us:

> Comprehensive immigration reform, which the U.S. bishops support, would replace illegality with a system based on legal presence and legal entry, thus restoring the rule of law to a chaotic system while also protecting the basic dignity, and lives, of our fellow brothers and sisters. It would require those who have broken the law to get on the right side of it by paying a fine, taxes, learning English and waiting in the back of a long line to have a chance to become a U.S. citizen.
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> This "path to citizenship" is in the best interests of migrants, who are able to become full members of their communities, and our nation, which will continue to benefit from their contributions without sacrificing our long-held values as a nation of immigrants: freedom, fairness and opportunity.

Well, brothers and sisters, I realize I've only touched the tip of the iceberg, but it's a start. And I'm eager to talk with you! Maybe we'll hear from some of our Hispanic listeners and Arizona listeners! What is your take on all of this? Are you confused about what the Church teaches on immigration? Does everyone in the world have a right to come to the United States? Does the Church welcome Latinos just because they're Catholic?

Here are the numbers: 1-800-585-9396 and 1-205-271-2985

Closing: A thousand thanks for your calls and emails. What would Open Line be without you? Just a couple of days ago, we celebrated Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. Let us never forget how important it is to embrace all life, for in this action, we are embracing the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.

Our CCC 1864 states:

Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin. There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept His mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation of the Holy Spirit.

Dear brothers and sisters, time is running out for each of us. We cannot be neutral or silent about sin and salvation, in muted consent, in misguided charity or false prudence. Think about it: An eternity without the presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit for a fleeting primordial sin of self-idolatry is insanity. The grace of God will give us the courage to speak the unpopular truth, and comfort us when we are persecuted for doing so!

Until next week on Open Line, Blessed be God and may He mightily bless you! Bye for now!