

June 15, 2012  
Vol. 3, Issue 2

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A Land of Missionaries, Immigrants and Saints

O'Meara Ferguson Acquires SchoolOne SIS Software Business

(GSN) Stewards of Religious Liberty

(podcast) I Thirst



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AND CONWAY

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## A Land of Missionaries, Immigrants and Saints

*"A Land of Missionaries, Immigrants and Saints", by Archbishop José H. Gomez, May 4, 2012*

*Introduction below by John Klink Managing Director, O'Meara Ferguson*

In his recent article which follows, Archbishop Jose Gomez as a good pastor, and Chair of the U.S. Bishops' Migration Committee, is appropriately recalling Americans to their long and proud tradition of welcoming the stranger.

Most Americans, when asked of their familial origins, are quick to point to their personal self-identification for instance, as x percentage Irish, x percentage Italian, German, Swedish, or Indian tribal affiliation. All generally proudly confess their foreign antecedence, and those who come from American Indians stock note with similar pride that their ancestors were a largely migratory people.

This unique American pride of foreign provenance finds a theological imperative in Catholic social teaching. As Pope Pius XII teaches in his Apostolic Constitution, *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, (The Exiled Family of Nazareth), the Holy Family itself, in its flight into Egypt, can be seen for all times as the "archetype of every refugee family...the models and protectors of every migrant, alien and refugee of whatever kind who, whether compelled by fear of persecution or by want, is forced to leave his native land, his beloved parents and relatives, his close friends, and to seek a foreign soil."

In like manner, Pius XII points out, the Gospel of Matthew (Mt. 25:42-46) reveals that an essential criteria for each individual's personal salvation is not only tied to assisting the poor. Our Lord also announces the absolute obligation that each person has to "welcome the stranger" to be considered for entry into the House of the Father at his right side.

Pius XII, and Church teachings on migration in general point to the sovereign rights of States to control their borders, but teach as

well that both migrant's rights and states' control must always be balanced and based on the universal common good.

Just as the Church defended the rights of our parents, grandparents or great great grandparents to find not only refuge, but seek employment abroad in their times of economic distress/civic and religious strife, so we are asked to be equally open to immigrants—even in our own "rough" times of financial distress.

Archbishop Gomez instructs that it is unfair to call to "justice" and immediate expulsion those who are unable to conform to a system of migration law which is broken. Rather, what is needed is a system whereby immigrants who follow a reasonable protocol will be assured of their right to eventual citizenship.

Many of our forbearers were lawful immigrants precisely because by following the laws of the time they could expect to achieve citizenship within a reasonable time frame and that they could expect to live in their new country with their immediate family. This is a far cry from current cases that we witness where some prospective domestic workers can face a wait of over 10 years to obtain a green card, or, as the Archbishop points out, such as the call for the expulsion of young people who have lived in the US for the vast majority of their lives and whose original arrival was not even their decision, or such as proposed policies which provide for individual migrant laborers to work for sometimes even long periods, but without their wives or children.

Just as it is not unreasonable to demand secure borders, so it is reasonable for immigrants to have a legally prescribed, timely pathway to citizenship which does not exclude their unity with their immediate family. Our own family histories would have been far different if our parents had not been welcomed with our grandfathers/grandmothers, but left to remain separated from their next of kin in their countries of origin.

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## A Land of Missionaries, Immigrants and Saints (page 2 of 2)

In a careful balancing of interests, a just system must ensure both that the human rights of candidates for citizenship are recognized, and that they have been appropriately screened, have acknowledged their concomitant responsibilities to their new community, and agree as integral members of their new communities whose initial help they will need, to make positive contributions to their new adopted land. A mutually beneficial outcome requires constructive political dialogue aimed at humane and practical solutions rather than divisive political diatribe.

Migrants, past and present, and their descendants—such as ourselves—not only have rights, but also responsibilities: in the first place, to become dedicated, hard-working, and constructive citizens; but secondly, and just as importantly, in due

turn, to be welcoming neighbors to those present and future migrants who seek to follow in theirs—and our own migrant forefathers'—footsteps.

Archbishop Gomez rightly reminds us of our long American and Catholic tradition of openness, and calls us to pray to the recently beatified María Inés Teresa Arias for the grace and wisdom to respond as creatively as possible to the opportunities before us.

To read the full article by Archbishop José H. Gomez, please visit:

<http://www.the-tidings.com/index.php/asdasdasdasdasd/cardinals-column/2292-a-land-of-missionaries-immigrants-and-saints->



Archbishop Jose Gomez is the Archbishop of Los Angeles, the largest US diocese, Chairman of the US Bishop's Migration Committee, and USCCB representative on the Governing Committee of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).



John Klink, a former diplomat for the Holy See, and former executive of Catholic Relief Services, is the President of the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) founded by Pius XII which is constituted of the world's Catholic bishops' conferences as its members. He is also a Managing Director of O'Meara Ferguson.