



STEWARDS OF OUR EARTH All of God's Creation

Social Justice Committee, Holy Cross Parish, Mt. Airy, December 18, 2022

All People Deserve a Safe Place to Call Home

Globally, there are more than 100 MILLION people who have been forcibly displaced— the highest number in history. “Right now, Members of Congress are negotiating federal funding legislation for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 that will invest in strengthening the U.S. resettlement program and the communities that welcome refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants.

This month, Congress will also be considering a number of other priorities impacting the long-term integration of our new Afghan and Ukrainian neighbors, family reunification, citizenship for Dreamers and other immigrant populations, affordable housing and homelessness programs, and reducing reliance on immigrant detention, deportations, and border militarization.” (Dina Al Bayati, *Church World Service*, 12/9/22) [Click here](#) to urge your Members of Congress to welcome and facilitate integration of our refugee, asylum seeking, and immigrant neighbors.

“At the heart of the U.S. response to immigrants coming to our borders is a **cruel and inhumane detention system** that dehumanizes and criminalizes persons whose only ‘offense’ is seeking a better life for themselves and their families....

Rather than waste billions of dollars to keep immigrants in prison, our government should support non-profit organizations that provide community-based support services to persons struggling to navigate the immigration court system. Abolishing the costly and harmful detention system is a prerequisite for any movement toward a more just and humane U.S. immigration policy.” (*Sisters of Justice Mercy Team*, 11/22/22)

Locally, some good news is that after 8 years of community organizing, the Federal government has announced the **closure of the immigrant prison in Berks County** on January 31, 2023. This is a victory for the Berks community and Pennsylvania. It was the result of a collaborative effort between many individuals including people who have suffered the violence of detention at the Berks Detention Center. (*Shut Down Berks Coalition*, 11/30/22)

But what happens to those still housed at Berks is uncertain. Berks has “been operated by the county through a contract with ICE, which holds undocumented immigrants there as their cases go through Immigration Court. It’s best known as having been one of three facilities in the country that confined immigrant families — mothers, fathers, and children. That role ended when Berks closed in early 2021, but it reopened this year as a detention center for immigrant women. **Many there are seeking asylum**, a legal means of staying in the United States for those who face persecution in their homelands.... Currently about 40 women are confined at Berks, and ICE says it expects their legal cases will conclude before the center closes. But — and it’s a big but — the women whose cases remain open will be transferred to other detention centers.... Advocates note that, even as Berks closes, the number of beds available to jail immigrants has soared in Pennsylvania...” (Jeff Gammage, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 12/9/22)

Pray for our sisters and brothers, and act to push changes.

Every human being is a child of God. He or she bears the image of Christ! We ourselves need to see, and then to enable others to see, that migrants and refugees do not only represent a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters to be welcomed, respected, and loved. —Pope Francis, Message for the 2014 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Issued August 5, 2013.