

Office of Peace, Justice and Integrity of Creation June 2014 Update

With a focus on Immigration



Sisters and Staff at Convent of Mary the Queen Welcomed Kaydian and her daughter to their home on May 30. Kaydian, mother of three children (American born citizens) who works as a registered nurse, is from Jamaica and faces deportation. Through Ravi Ragbir, outreach coordinator at New Sanctuary for Families, NYC, we heard of Kaydian. Initiated by the SCNY Immigration Task Force, Kaydian was invited to share her story and receive a blessing. Gifts were given and received that afternoon. Sisters and staff became acquainted with a faithful dedicated woman who

experienced a profound conversion. Kaydian was welcomed with open hearts and minds and promised continued prayers and letters of support when needed.

Immigration and the New York Sisters Of Charity – The Sister of Charity history relating to immigration in southwest Yonkers was documented in the Summer 2013 issue of VISION. The issue explored our present-day immigration commitments to English language classes in our multi-service center of Casa de Esperanza staffed by Sr. Jean Bocian and Sr. Teresa McElroy, as well as L.I.G.H.T., a bustling ESL program with classes at Sisters of Charity Center and one on one tutoring by sisters at Convent of Mt. St. Vincent. It is not surprising that we should be so involved, as our Sister of Charity history beginning in Emmitsburg, Maryland was largely formed from young immigrant women. In 1817 Mother Seton sent three sisters to work in an orphanage for Irish children at St. Patrick’s, Mott Street. Subsequently, wherever immigrants were neglected (in education, health care, etc.) we followed— New York City, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and along the Hudson Valley.

The SCNY Immigration Task Force, coordinated by chairs, Sisters Wilda Asfour and Eileen Judge, continues this legacy with the help of its members through systemic change, prayer, presence, education and advocacy. Sr. Elizabeth Butler (Sr. Lily) – an Irish immigrant herself – accompanies undocumented immigrants who are in danger of deportation, giving hope to families who would be separated: husband from spouses, parents from children. Sr. Lily works in conjunction with Judson Memorial Church and the New Sanctuary Coalition, NYC, and takes part in the Jericho Walk.

Sr. Eileen Judge, a veteran missionary from Guatemala, volunteers in Dutchess County for Hudson River Health Care as interpreter and outreach worker. She is also on the Board of “Somos la Llave del Futuro” (“We Are the Key to the Future”). With the Hudson Valley Community Coalition and other groups, Sr. Eileen has attended Advocacy Lobby Days in Albany and Washington, DC., visited her local congressional offices, and recently Bishop Hubbard to advocate for reform.

Sr. Elizabeth Judge, a former missionary in Guatemala and Bahamas, volunteers in Hope Community Services, New Rochelle which primarily serves immigrants by providing problem-solving, a food pantry, dinner four times a week, etc.

Members of the Task Force continually advocate for just federal and state laws that bring justice to those living under the shadow of our broken immigration system. Sisters at the Convents of Mount Saint Vincent and Mary the Queen have sent hundreds of letters and emails (and made just as many phone calls) to Congress. The SCNY stand with the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops' statement that "now is the time to pass just and comprehensive reform, preserving family unity, a path to citizenship, and provide legal paths for low-skilled migrant workers to work in the United States."

These are only a few of the ways, the Sisters of Charity and Associates are responding to the Bishops' call to "welcome the stranger" and live the 2011 Assembly mandate to stand with the immigrant and work towards comprehensive immigration reform. From the time of the Irish orphans of 1817, to today's struggling immigrants, the motto of St. Vincent de Paul, "the Charity of Christ presses us" resounds in our hearts as we remember our own immigrant roots and that of the community.

Thanks to Sr. Lorraine Cooper, SC, a member of the SCNY Immigration Task Force, who wrote above article.



Presence, Support and Advocacy through Accompaniment – Sister Lily Butler (right) accompanies Kaydian McKenzie (center) to her ICE (Immigration Customs Enforcement) hearing at Federal Plaza. Kaydian got good news on June 3. She does not have to report back for another six months. The Sisters of Charity of New York collaborate with New Sanctuary for Families, NYC who work with those who are undocumented and face deportation. Susan Karlson, co-director of New Sanctuary for Families, NYC, is on left. New Sanctuary Coalition, NYC is one of many groups with which the SCNY Immigration Task Force collaborates. Each Thursday from 11 am to noon, a group of people participate in the Jericho Walk around Federal Plaza. Their silent and reverent witness has invited people to ask the why and what that people who are undocumented face. Please consider participating in the Jericho Walk. For those not able to be present physically, we invite you to join through prayer. Contact Sr. Wilda Asfour for a copy of the Jericho Prayer.

The SCNY Immigration Task Force invites you to the following concrete actions:

- ❖ Visit Justice for Immigrants website, www.justiceforimmigrants.org, out of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Become familiar with Church teachings, facts and resources. Share insights with family, friends and colleagues. Send a weekly electronic postcard on website to your representatives – urge comprehensive immigration reform.
- ❖ Listen to the story of someone who is undocumented in our country today.

Did you know ... there is a Sisters of Charity of New York Immigration Statement? And, that the Vincentian Family / Sisters of Charity Federation Social Justice Contacts have also issued a Collaborative Statement on Immigration?

Contact Carol De Angelo, PJIC Director, 718-549-9235 for more information.