

Mexican Immigration V

want to secure migrants' political support, and so they use similar techniques to govern a mobile population. For example, both governments and episcopates survey migrants to determine their demographic characteristics, legal status, migration routes, U.S. destinations, and occupations. Each tries to document the amounts of collective remittances; how they are spent; and the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the remitters. Just as the Mexican state has at times issued identification documents that also attest to the bearer's moral character, on a smaller scale, priests in Mexico have issued ecclesiastical identification documents (e.g. a Baptismal Certificate) and letters of introduction to destination parishes. This often happens with sacramental preparations such as for matrimony.

At the local level, particularly in Mexico, the Church often has better records than the state such as in parish registries, given that local government bureaucracy there is shot through with clientelism, lack of continuity between administrations, and corruption.

The state imitates the Church's administrative methods by building on an existing system of baptismal registries to record births and by following the Church's model of creating directories of migrants from particular hometowns. And the Church's transnational structure make embracing its mobile members easier. Mexican consulates attempt similar coverage, but U.S. sovereignty limits the Mexican government's capacity to accomplish this goal.

The Catholic Church continues to be one of the major voices for comprehensive immigration reform in the United States. The hierarchy and clergy are attempting to lead their flocks on these issues, since

there is ample evidence that U.S. Catholics' attitudes toward immigration are about as restrictive as those of non-Catholics. The main points of this effort of leading the flocks center on a path to legalization, family reunification, humane border control and interior enforcement policies, and economic development in Mexico.

With that being said, let me conclude this series by taking a look at what St. Thomas Aquinas has to say about immigration. What he wrote about it may be found in the *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q. 105, Art. 3. I'll take some of the quotes from that question and article, and do a little commentary on them.

1. "Man's relations with foreigners are twofold: peaceful, and hostile: and in directing both kinds of relation the Law contained suitable precepts." Certainly the story of Mexican immigration to this country is one of hostility (deportation) and peacefulness (shelters), but the "suitable precepts" to which St. Thomas refers makes an important distinction between the foreigners that are hostile or peaceful in regard to the host country. We live at a time when many on both sides of the border wish to eliminate this distinction, which may be found in the distinction between legal and illegal immigration. amongst other places. The purpose of legal immigration is to insure that the immigrant is peaceful, and not hostile to the host country. Thus the support of legal immigration and the rejection of illegal, are certainly in keeping with the doctrine of St. Thomas.

The decision of large numbers of Catholic bishops, clergy and laity to help those who decide to migrate has made the emigration of Mexican citizens to the U.S. easier. Along with travel agents, human smugglers, immigration lawyers, and labor brokers, Catholic organizations (such as Catholic Charities) offering refuge along the border are important nongovernmental actors that enable international migration. I say easier, with the caveat that travelling illegally through the Arizona desert say, is anything but easy. It's exceedingly dangerous, if only for the problem of water.

Although the Church and the government both promote remittances, their rationales differ. The Church has always emphasized migrants' responsibility to provide for families left behind, which has to do with consumption; the government, with particular intensity since the 1990s, has emphasized investments rather than consumption.

In terms of U.S. immigration reform, the Mexican and U.S. episcopates have adopted the Mexican government's policy positions — such as legalization for most of the unauthorized migrants in the United States and a temporary worker program — though they also criticize the Mexican government for abusing Central Americans in transit through Mexico. The Church in Mexico has called for targeted development projects in migrant-source regions to create economic alternatives to migration plus matching-fund programs, which multiply remittances, to generate investment in migrant-source communities. The perfect example of this is the empire of Carlos Slim, who is perhaps the richest man in

the world. The profit he has made on immigrants using is cell phone companies is staggering. I read that he alone represents 6 % of the entire GNP of Mexico.

Other areas of Church policy in Mexico, such as encouraging migrants to return for religious fiestas, have clear consequences. The pull of the fiestas weakened during the advent of concentrated border enforcement in the mid-1990s. But fewer unauthorized migrants are willing to return to their hometowns and then incur the high smuggling fees and physical risks of illegally reentering the United States afterward.

Because religious fiestas attract so many migrants, the Mexican state has piggy-backed on these events by either cooperating with local priests, or, in some communities, attempting to shift the focus toward a secular fiesta. In both cases, religious fiestas predate the government's secular involvement.

Fiestas are advantageous from the state's point of view because they promote permanent emigration with continued homeland ties and tourism. The government considers this combination the best recipe for attracting remittances and forming a Mexican lobby to press its trade and immigration policy preferences in the United States.

While the Church and the government do not always share the same goals (to put it mildly), Mexican and American Church hierarchy still worry about migration's moral effects. And I worry about it too which by now should be obvious. The Mexican and American governments