

LET ILLEGAL IMMIGS VISIT HOME - O'C

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Body

Cardinal O'Connor boldly proposed yesterday that illegal Central American immigrants be permitted to make a round trip to their hurricane-ravaged homeland.

"Would it be absurd to suggest that there be some kind of validation of their status, that they be permitted to go down and visit their suffering families in the Central American countries so badly hit by the hurricane?" he offered during his weekly Sunday homily at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"What they earn here is pitiful by our standards because they don't have green cards," he continued. "They do the most menial work, but much of the money that they make goes to those who are even more impoverished in Central America." The cardinal sprang his idea as First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton prepared to visit Nicaragua, one of the hardest hit of the nations slammed by Mitch, which claimed 10,000 lives and caused billions of dollars in damage.

O'Connor also urged the United States and other developed nations to forgive the debts of poverty-stricken Central America.

Honduras and Nicaragua have asked for forgiveness of the combined \$ 10 billion they owe in foreign debt.

France agreed to the requests last week. Nicaragua owed France \$ 70 million; Honduras owed France \$ 30 million. Cuba also announced it was canceling Nicaraguan debts of \$ 50 million.

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