

## **BROOKLYN BISHOP GIVES ASSIST TO IMMIGRANTS**

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### **Body**

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**Bishop** Nicholas DiMarzio is lending his voice and moral authority to battling some of the more draconian features of the immigration reform bills that are working their way through Congress. **Brooklyn's** Catholic spiritual leader has joined his colleague from Los Angeles, Roger Cardinal Mahony, in declaring that Catholic workers would ignore any provision that makes it a crime to "**assist**" **immigrants** in the country illegally.

In his forthcoming column in the diocesan newspaper, The Tablet, DiMarzio writes: "Specifically, I can categorically state that there will never be a time when priests, religious and dedicated laypeople whose ministry and service is among **immigrants** will ever be forced to limit the Church's outreach and care because of the contents of a person's passport." Hear, hear.

That DiMarzio and Mahony feel compelled to make such statements grows out of the fact that the immigration measure passed by the House can be read as saying that anyone who provides food, clothing, shelter or medical attention to an illegal **immigrant** would be guilty of a felony punishable by up to five years in prison. Long Island's Rep. Pete King, one of the bill's sponsors, is adamant that the language is aimed at **immigrant** smuggling rings and the like, not against citizens who would offer a crust of bread to the undocumented needy.

Such may be the intent, but the bill does target anyone who knowingly "**assists**" an illegal to reside in the U.S., not just someone who "encourages or induces" an illegal to live here, as is barred by present law. There's a big difference between **assisting** and inducing, so DiMarzio has grounds for his concern. And he is also right in opposing the House's concentration on enforcement and border security to the exclusion of providing a path toward legalization for America's estimated 12 million undocumented workers.

In fact, DiMarzio strikes the right note in recognizing the need for secure borders balanced with, say, a guest-worker program enabling illegals to hold jobs that go unfilled by citizens. He writes: "Church teaching upholds the right of a sovereign nation to protect its borders and admit whom it wishes to promote the common good. The provisions of this bill calls forth the worst in people and will not fix our broken immigration system or make our country any safer."

True reform, he says, "would provide a pathway to allow people to regularize an undocumented status and come out of the shadows." The Senate proposal sponsored by Ted Kennedy and John McCain would accomplish the goal, and President Bush has generally endorsed the same approach.

As the Senate wrestles with the issue, lawmakers would do well to heed DiMarzio's words, the apprehensions a specific word, "**assists**," has engendered. For the good of everyone, exorcise it.

Gee, Officer Krupke

## BROOKLYN BISHOP GIVES ASSIST TO IMMIGRANTS

**Brooklyn's** Velmanette Montgomery was the lone member of the state Senate to vote the other day against a bill aimed at protecting teenagers from being dragooned into violent gangs. Mindful that gang bangers can be brutally persuasive - and have been known to demand that new members slash or rape random victims by way of initiation - every other member of the Senate voted to make gang recruitment a felony punishable by up to seven years in prison.

Yet Democrat Montgomery, whose district includes Bedford-Stuyvesant, Red Hook and other neighborhoods where gangs have been known to flourish, stood solitarily firm against the sensible measure. "I'm going to vote 'no' on this because I'm representing my young people," the senator explained, referring, it is clear, to the likes of the Crips and the Bloods.

Yes, we suppose that bangers too deserve political representation, and we're all for rooting out every cause that Montgomery laments as a root cause of anti-social behavior - even if we don't agree that people act depraved only on account of being deprived, as the song goes. But what the senator fails to understand is that the young people who need representation first are those who are at risk of being lured - or, worse, intimidated - into joining the gang life. To think otherwise is plain nutty.

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