

June 14, 2007

Call to the People of Faith

The ICE roundup in Portland on Tuesday, June 12, and detention of the Fresh Del Monte workers suspected of being undocumented, produced situations which compel us to respond from our witness to justice and service and commitment to human and civil rights. Families were separated, legal issues have yet to be defined, and we know that economic hardships will be more evident with each passing day.

We ask that our homilies, sermons, prayers in worship services, masses, spiritual gatherings, congregational meetings this weekend be dedicated to the people affected by the raids. We also ask that each community of faith begin reflecting on its theological, religious, ethical, and spiritual basis to decide what we ought to care about and what should be our fitting and urgent response. To see what other communions and religious groups are saying and doing, see Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's website: www.emoregon.org

Some of the options for response that are emerging include:

- 1) Sanctuary congregations. Presently, several congregations have declared themselves sanctuary churches: Augustana Lutheran Church (ELCA) and St. Andrews Catholic Church in Portland. They have made public declarations and are ready to receive families in need and respond in a variety of ways. If you would like further information, please call (503) 203 4276, or go to: www.newsancturarymovement.org
- 2) Material support. Special funds can be established or mission resources to help pay for food, shelter, childcare etc., that families may need can be coordinated with local community agencies or send a check to projects like El Programa Hispano-Catholic Charities, and in the memo line put "raid relief". Checks can be mailed to: 451 NW 1st St, Gresham, OR 97030 in Gresham
- 3) Pastoral and chaplain services. People in detention centers, like the one in Tacoma, WA, and other in Oregon may be visited by clergy and chaplains. Also, women, men, youth and children affected by the round-ups are needing emotional and spiritual support.
- 4) Hospitality and refuge. Our buildings may receive families, individuals, or extend space for community meetings, pastoral counseling, legal clinics, etc.
- 5) Accompaniment. A well-organized group of lawyers, community leaders, church representatives, union people, among many others, monitored and observed the ICE roundup in Portland. Since more raids will continue to occur throughout the state of Oregon, we need people to become part of the teams. Call VOZ for materials and training (503) 233 6787.
- 6) Educational and advocacy forums, trainings about related issues on immigration reform and labor and what can be done are being offered by such statewide and regional groups as the Rural Organization Project (503) 543 8417 www.rop.org, the Oregon Farm Worker Ministry (503) 990 0611, the Faith and Labor

- Committee of Jobs with Justice (503) 236 5573. Both OFWM and the JWJ F&L Committee offer worship resources and pulpit supply regarding labor issues, including the Employee Free Choice Act. Also the National Farm Worker Ministry www.nfwm.org, and Interfaith Worker Justice www.iwj.org provide instructional and religious resources.
- 7) Resources: Legal Aid Services of Oregon (503) 981 5291, and the Oregon Law Center (503) 981 0339, are prepared to handle labor and employment issues; and immigration issues by Catholic Charities Immigration Legal Services (503) 542 2855, as well as the Immigration Counseling Service (503) 221 1689.

These are just a sampling of what our religious communities can do at this critical time. Please share with your communities, your outreach, mission, and social justice committees, and be intentional about responding on an ecumenical and interfaith basis, in collaboration with community organizations, civic groups, and local government where possible.

Sincerely,

Jobs with Justice Faith & Labor Committee