

**ENCORE
ACCESS**

Immigration and Catholic Social Teaching

with Kristin E. Heyer

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BOSTON COLLEGE
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY

Immigration and Catholic Social Teaching

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource is a guide to using an STM Online: Encore presentation as a conversation starter with members of a faith community. Each part of the presentation may be used separately, in combinations with each other, or in a sequence over a period of time. For example, a catechetical leader might use each part of the presentation over the course of a year at meetings with catechists. A pastor may choose to use only one segment to encourage discussion on a related agenda item. “Immigration and Catholic Social Teaching” has broad application to issues facing faith communities today. Consider using one or more segments with a parish pastoral council, or with a social justice or outreach



OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

In the fall of 2017, Kristin E. Heyer gave a public presentation entitled “Kinship Across Borders: Catholic Ethics and Migration.” In it, she offers insights regarding the issue of immigration and the way in which Catholic ethics and social teaching can shape how we think about migration today. After providing a window on the reality of immigrant experience here in the United States, Dr. Heyer explores the contribution that Scripture and Catholic ethics can make in challenging the present political and economic discussions. The impact of present practices toward immigrants is examined, with a particular emphasis on women and families. Dr. Heyer concludes her presentation with some signs of hope.

Kristin E. Heyer is professor of theology at Boston College

Part 1: Immigration - Politics and Experience [video 9 minutes]

Part 2: Insights from Scripture [video 8 minutes]

Part 3: Catholic Social Teaching [video 9 minutes]

Part 4: Impact on Women and Families [video 6 minutes]

Part 5: Signs of Hope [video 8 minutes]

Part 1: Immigration - Politics and Experience

OVERVIEW

Heyer begins by setting the contemporary political scene within which immigrants are viewed and understood. She then counters that with a reflection on her own experience of immigrants, which is quite different from the political characterization.

“ . . . a month after her high school graduation, ICE agents with loaded guns, bullet proof vests, and steel-toed boots surrounded her house, pounding down the door, demanding to see her. As she tells it, “I came out to the front yard where the head agent asked my name while pulling out handcuffs as if standing in front of some criminal. No GPA or a letter of recommendation could save me then. I fell to my knees in front of the agent and began pleading with him to let me stay, telling him I was starting college in a month on a special scholarship. He said, ‘Fine, I’ll let you go. But only if you tell me where your dad is.’”

When her mortified mother nodded yes to go ahead and tell him, the student revealed the information and ICE left to arrest her dad at his workplace in front of his boss and coworkers and deport him. The student reflects, “I stood in complete disbelief. I had sold out my own dad for an education.”

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. How does your experience with migrants shape your understanding of and response to the present political discussions?
2. How might you and/or your faith community develop opportunities to engage and accompany migrants in your area?

Part 2: Insights from Scripture

OVERVIEW

Beginning with the image of the Holy Family as refugees when they fled from Bethlehem to Egypt after Jesus's birth, Heyer highlights a central theme of the Gospels: bringing justice and compassion to the poor. This section also focuses on the Good Samaritan and its implications for Catholic ethical thought.

Scripture Passages

Ex 23:9 "You shall not oppress a resident alien"
Lev 19:33-35 "you shall love the alien as yourself"
Lev 24:22 "You shall have but one rule"
Deut 14:28-29 "that the the resident alien . . . may come and eat"
Deut 16:14 "You shall rejoice at your feast"
Num 15:15-16 "You and the resident alien will be alike"
Num 35:15 "places of asylum for the resident or transient aliens"
Is 3:14 ". . . the loot wrested from the poor"
Jer 22:16 "Is not this to know me? says the Lord."
Amos 8:5-6 "We will buy the destitute for silver"
Luke 4:16-18 ". . . to let the oppressed go free"
Luke 10:25-37 The parable of the Good Samaritan



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. Whom do you see as the immigrant? Describe the image you hold of the immigrants in your midst.
2. What elements of the Good Samaritan story contribute to your understanding of what Catholic ethics says about how we perceive and treat immigrants?
3. What other images or stories from the Gospels give you insight into the core elements of a Catholic perspective of migration?

Part 3: Catholic Social Teaching

OVERVIEW

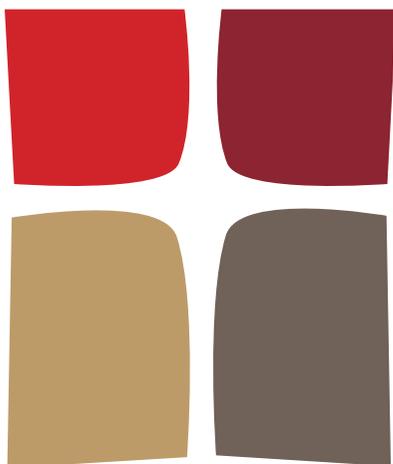
This section looks at the themes that shape a Christian immigration ethic. Heyer highlighted the effect of a privatized ethic and the need for a collective response for addressing the needs of migrants. Heyer builds on Catholic Social Teaching with its emphasis on the dignity of the human person, the inherent relationality of all people, and the call for the common good.

Catholic Social Thought

- *all persons are sacred and social beyond borders*
- *universal social and economic rights and responsibilities*
- *viable path to citizenship as securing rights and responsibilities, serving justice and security*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. In this section of the video, what themes from Catholic Social Teaching drew your attention? What challenges do you see in giving expression to those within your community?
2. What elements of American culture do you think work against an awareness of the communal nature of our responsibility? How do we address these?



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Part 4: Impact on Women and Families

OVERVIEW

Here Heyer brings to the fore the detrimental effect of present immigration policies, particularly on women and families. She sees these present policies as a threat to key Catholic family values.

Feminization of Migration

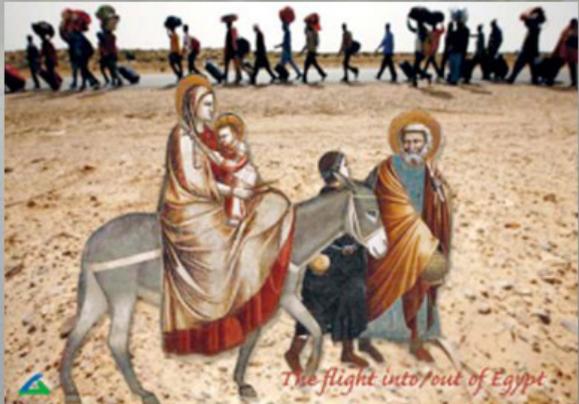


Feminization of poverty and labor force
Gender-specific risks en route and on the job
Barriers to speaking out in the face of abuse

(Photo: Nancy Ghertner 2011 *After I Pick the Fruit*)

Market logic obscures immigrants' family relationships

Families' social mission → the common good



The flight into/out of Egypt

(Image: Franciscans International Christmas Card)

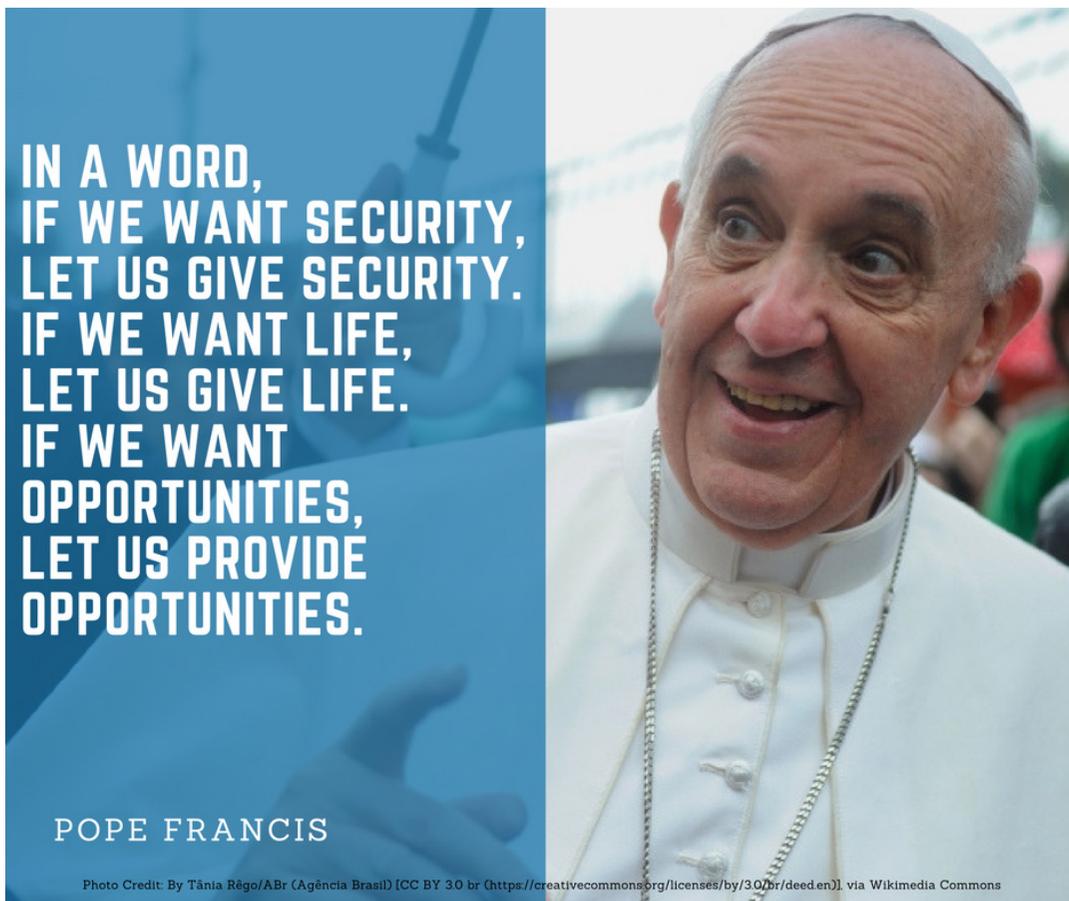
QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. What did you find surprising or concerning about the discussion of the “feminization of migration” and the impact of migration and immigration policy on women and families? What types of support might be needed to minimize these impacts?
2. How might your faith community serve as a resource for those struggling with families divided by immigration policies?

Part 5: Signs of Hope

OVERVIEW

Where does our hope come from as we strive to address issues of immigration? Heyer looks to Pope Francis's witness to encounter and solidarity; to those who have spoken prophetically about the demands this issue makes on the Church; and to the courage of those willing to share their own stories as immigrants and refugees.



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

1. As you think about the issues surrounding immigration in this country, what do you see as signs of hope?
2. How might you and your faith community be a sign of hope?