

Immigration Summit 2016

*Most Reverend José H. Gomez
Archbishop of Los Angeles*

*Christ Cathedral
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Brothers and sisters,

It's great to be with you today.

Before I say anything else, I want to say thank you. *¡Gracias!*

I know how much all of you are doing every day for our immigrant brothers and sisters — to welcome them and defend their rights; to accompany them as they try to build a new life. I know you carry out your ministries often at great personal cost. So thank you for your commitment and sacrifice and your generosity. You are a beautiful witness to God's love and mercy. *¡Gracias!* Thank you!

This year, my brothers and sisters, we are gathering together in the presence of *La Cruz de los Encuentros*.

This is a special symbol. The Encuentro Cross is a sign of the long faith-journey of Latino Catholics in the United States. It's also a sign of the "encounter" of Jesus Christ and his Gospel with the peoples of the Americas.

I had the privilege to present this cross to Pope Francis at Independence Hall in Philadelphia last September. I was there with two of my brother bishops and an immigrant family from Mexico. It was a beautiful, unforgettable moment — a historic day for all the spiritual children of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Our Holy Father blessed the Encuentro Cross and he reminded us that he himself is an immigrant's son and a child of the Americas. He encouraged us to keep working until all our brothers and sisters can one day find what they came here looking for — simply a better life for their children and loved ones.

This Encuentro Cross has continued to accompany us. Just 10 days ago, this cross was standing in El Paso right along the border — looking over to the other side where Pope Francis was celebrating Mass in Ciudad Juárez. I know many of you were there, I had the privilege to cross over the border and concelebrate with the Pope.

I know many of you heard the Pope's powerful words in his homily:

“Here in Ciudad Juárez, as in other border areas, there are thousands of immigrants from Central America and other countries, not forgetting the many Mexicans who also seek to pass over ‘to the other side.’ Each step, a journey laden with grave injustices: the enslaved, the imprisoned and extorted; so many of these brothers and sisters of ours are the consequence of a trade in human trafficking, the trafficking of persons. We cannot deny the humanitarian crisis ... This crisis which can be measured in numbers and statistics. We want instead to measure with names, stories, families.”

So my brothers and sisters, today in the presence of this Encuentro Cross, this symbol of struggle and hope, let us rededicate ourselves to our people — to their names, their stories, their families.

Our struggle has never been about politics. It’s always been about people. People who are hurting and exploited, people who are dying.

And look. We need to be honest with ourselves. Politicians in both parties have let us down and ignored our people’s suffering for their own agendas. This is a moral failure and a human tragedy.

So many promises that have not been kept. On both sides. More than 2 million deportations in the last eight years alone. Not criminals. The vast majority — just ordinary mothers and fathers. In some cases, children.

We’re here today for those ordinary people. We’re here to tell their stories, to speak for those who have no voice. We’re here to challenge our leaders and neighbors: What kind of society addresses its problems by deporting a little girl’s dad?

My brothers and sisters, we can’t get discouraged by politics and the media. Don’t give in to sadness, bitterness or anger! God is with us! Our cause is true and our cause is just. We need to keep moving forward, keep taking positive steps.

The driver’s license initiative last year made a big difference in the lives of countless ordinary people. If we work this year to encourage naturalization and citizenship — this will make a real difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

So let’s keep going. Let’s keep making a positive difference in people’s lives.

We also need to keep working to show our neighbors who do not understand the immigration crisis, what this broken immigration system is doing to people.

Our neighbors are good people. They love this country and they want to do good, they want to do the right thing. But they are confused and frightened. We can help them to understand. We can soften their hearts and change their minds. I know we can.

We have to keep concentrating on the “human face” of immigration reform — the names, the stories, the families. Mothers and fathers, sons and daughters. We need to show that

these faces today are no different from the generations of immigrants that came before. Faces just like the Italian and Irish families we see in the film, “Brooklyn,” which is up for an Oscar tomorrow night.

We need to keep calling our neighbors to conversion and mercy. We need to help them see that we are all God’s children and that people don’t lose their humanity when they have an irregular immigration status.

My brothers and sisters, let’s keep bringing this message to our society, and let’s keep praying and working for comprehensive immigration reform.

Let’s take up our own “cross of encounter” and go with Jesus. Together let’s keep walking with our brothers and sisters — on the long path that leads to justice, dignity and inclusion.

May Mary, the Mother of Guadalupe, continue to go with us and give us courage and strength.

Thank you for listening and again, thank you for all your dedication to justice and the culture of life.