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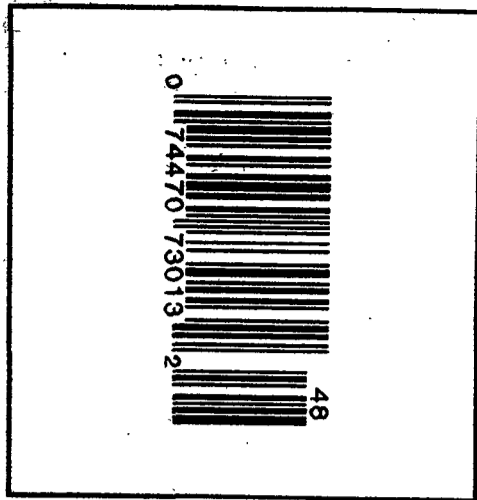
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CATHOLIC COURIER

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER, NY

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Parish profile

This week's featured community in our semi-monthly series focusing on diocesan churches is Brighton's Our Lady of Lourdes, whose parishioners are helping fund a crucial health center for their 'twin' parish of St. Brigit's in Tanzania. Page 7.



File photo

HOPEFUL ARRIVALS — Anxiously awaiting their new beginnings, immigrants of all ages journey to America around the turn of the century.

Diocese extends welcome to new strangers among us

By Lee Strong
Senior staff writer

ROCHESTER — The Rochester diocese was established during an era when European immigrants flowed into western New York.

Now the descendants of those immigrants face an influx of newcomers from Mexico, Central America, Haiti, Vietnam and other parts of the world.

Although these new immigrants face many problems, at least two groups — Vietnamese and Hispanics — have received a welcoming hand from the diocese in recent years.

For the Vietnamese and Amerasians — the children of American servicemen and Vietnamese women — that support often comes initially from the Catholic Family Center's Refugee Resettlement Program. As they adjust to their new surroundings, many of these newcomers receive assistance through CFC's many support programs.

In addition to receiving support from Rochester's growing Vietnamese community, they also get ongoing assistance from the diocesan Office of



File photo

HAITIAN REFUGEES — A Haitian and her baby were part of a group of 668 refugees that were picked up in December of 1991 by the Coast Guard in the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti.

Asian-Pacific Apostolate. Ha Nguyen, the office's director, estimated that the diocese's Vietnamese population is somewhere between 4,000-5,000 — 500 to 600 of whom are Catholic.

Although discrimination exists, these Asians have not been the target of much prejudice in Rochester, Nguyen said.

"The problem (of racism) has always been there, and I think it will always be there," observed Nguyen, who, along with her family, immigrated to the Rochester diocese in 1975. "The diocese has really gone out of its way to do something about it."

As part of their efforts, diocesan officials — in conjunction with the Albany and Syracuse dioceses — have arranged for Father John Tiep to celebrate a monthly Mass in Vietnamese. The Mass is celebrated in Rochester at St. Anthony of Padua Church, 60 Lorimer St.

St. Anthony's also serves as the venue for Nguyen's office, where she conducts sacramental preparation programs and catechesis for Viet-

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U.S. bishops release migration document

EDITORS' NOTE: On Nov. 16, the U.S. bishops' Committee on Migration released the following statement, titled, "The Injustice of Anti-Foreigner Sentiment."

"For the Lord your God ... renders justice for the orphans and the widows, and befriends the aliens, feeding and clothing them. So you must befriend the aliens, for you were once aliens yourselves" (Dt. 10:17-19).

As pastors, we are deeply concerned about the growing hostility toward immigrants evident now in some parts of our society and even, sad to say, supported by some public officials. This hostility is often expressed by publicly blaming our current economic and social difficulties on foreigners who have come to the United States seeking a new life. In the context of Catholic social teaching and in the light of our Judeo-Christian heritage, such an attitude is not acceptable. Some public officials are calling for and/or initiating public policies that tend to foster an attitude of selfishness and greed, racism and cultural bias. There are some who would even go so far as to restrict basic health and educational services which are due by right to every human being. We must raise our collective voice to protest this mentality and call for a change of heart and a renewed commitment as a nation to solidarity with immigrants and refugees.

From time to time in our nation's history we have seen periods of nativism. This form of ethnic and social isolationism which favors one's own citizens to an exaggerated degree plays on the unfounded personal and social fears of immi-

grants. In this situation, "those not like us" become scapegoats for all of the ills of our society. Left unchallenged, nativism deeply embeds itself into the very fabric of our common economic, social and political life. Our concern is that the growing negative rhetoric about immigrants and the attendant policy proposals and legislation at the national, state and local levels brings about a new wave of nativism which is destructive to the development of healthy communities. Those communities prosper when old and potentially new groups of citizens learn to live and work together.

**'I was a
stranger
and you
welcomed me'**

Mt. 25:35

As a nation we need to stop and think about what is at stake and what we lose by blaming and rejecting immigrants. Certain values hold our society together and give shape and common expression to our lives. Respect for people and their human dignity, family relationships, the strength arising from diverse cultures and the commitment to the common good of our society are placed in jeopardy when we too easily reject the sojourners, strangers and aliens in our midst. Americans cannot deny the great contributions made by immigrants in the building and continuing development of our society.

Our biblical tradition, the social teachings of our church and our nation's history all provide a strong basis of support for immigrants and refugees. Jesus' own words, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35), should be our guiding ethic and action. At a time of continuing deep recession and general anxiety about the future for so many, the temptation to blame immigrants is all too easy. We must resist this temptation. Rather than reject immigrants we should reject the political cynicism of the anti-foreigner sentiment.

A more open attitude toward immigrants reflects an awareness of the underlying causes of the mass migration in the world today. The widening gap between rich and poor nations, ecological disasters and ethnic conflicts contribute to this mass migration. The post-Cold War era has ushered in a new time of uncertainty. Ethnic wars, economic and political collapse, and a legitimate desire to improve the daily circumstances of life for one's family motivate many to search for new opportunities in countries outside their homelands. While it is true that no one country can respond totally or take in all those seeking freedom and a new life, the world of nations simply cannot shut its eyes or doors. The most vulnerable in the world — those with nowhere to lay their heads be-

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