

A "Personal Reflection"  
given July 27, 2008 at  
"An Interfaith Prayer Service, March and Rally  
in Solidarity with our Latino Brothers and Sisters  
Saint Bridget's Catholic Church, Postville, Iowa"

On behalf of the Bishop and of the Lutheran Church in Northeastern Iowa, I thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon. We are thankful for the witness of Saint Paul's Lutheran Church, ELCA in Postville and for the bold leadership of Pastor Steven Brackett. We rejoice in the partnership we share with Saint Bridget's Roman Catholic Church. While the cause itself is filled with sadness the ministry and friendships that have grown here between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic congregations are a blessing. Now, we also welcome our brothers and sisters from the Jewish community. Today, I have sat in a Catholic Church with more Rabbis than all the other days of my life combined!

Much is being said these days about following the law. Those who want strict enforcement of immigration laws have gotten the action they have wanted. They have gotten what they have wanted even though it has eaten away at this town; even though it has devastated the school district; even though it was torn apart families.

Much is being said these days about following the law. But we are here waiting for the enforcement of labor laws! This morning's issue of the New York Times exposes incidents of child labor, physical abuse, sexual abuse, safety violations and much more. Yet, we wait for enforcement of *these* laws.

Much is being said these days about following the law. But not enough is being said about following God's law.

*You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt. I the Lord am your God Lev.19:34*

*You shall not violate the rights of the stranger or the orphan, nor take the clothing of a widow. For remember you were once slaves in Egypt, and the Lord your God, freed you from there; this is why I command you to observe this rule. Deut. 24:17-18*

God, our creator, gave us the law as a gift so that we could live in community. Where God's law is ignored there is no justice; no dignity; no security. When God's law is ignored there is no community.

The rumor is that the Latino caucus of the United States Congress is in Postville today. Let us call upon all politicians to work together to fix this legislation so that people of faith do not have to choose between what is legal and what is faithful.

Let us call upon all politicians to act of “family values” in a way that respects the sanctity of all families.

Let us call upon all politicians to protect workers, their dignity, and their safety as vehemently as they talk about protecting our borders.

Let a new immigration legislation be constructed on God’s laws so that we can live in Shalom.

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