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## Immigration outreach discussed among conference participants

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SALT LAKE CITY -- In case you haven't heard, the U.S. bishops' conference has a special campaign directed toward immigration work. And some parishes have even started committees named after the group.

Justice for Immigrants, the campaign that started in 2005, is focused on uniting and mobilizing Catholic institutions and people of Catholic faith and people of other faiths "in support of a broad legalization program and comprehensive immigration reform." In keeping with the U.S. and Mexican bishops' pastoral letter, "Strangers No Longer," it is also committed to maximizing the church's influence on this issue, according to its website.

"The JFI campaign has established diocesan partnerships to carry out parish organizing in a number of dioceses throughout the country," said Tony Cubé, national manager for Justice for Immigrants, at a workshop session hosted by Justice for Immigrants at this week's "Immigration: A 50-State Issue" conference in Salt Lake City.

He listed dioceses and archdioceses that have had success with outreach, such as Miami, Orlando and Philadelphia.

When you bring together immigrant groups and non-immigrant groups at Catholic celebrations (such as an Our Lady of Guadalupe celebration), "it breaks down barriers," he said.

"It shows that we are ... one family under God, and our way of worshiping is universal, international," he said.

Strategies mentioned by a group from the San Jose, Calif., diocese include a story-telling project (they gathered recorded stories of interviews with immigrants, using some of the material to create a musical, which will also work as a fundraiser); outreaches to parish and high schools; research trips to Phoenix, Puebla and other cities; regular diocesan meetings; an annual leadership day; and engaging other groups in outreach.

The group's steering committee focuses on advocacy, education and community organizing. One parish in San Jose that was mentioned in the workshop implemented this outreach and saw a dip in collection contributions. But over time, collection contributions gradually increased, finally settling at a level above what the average had been before the outreach began.

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