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Checking IDs on the Road to Emmaus

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One of the best passages in scripture comes from Luke's Gospel: the Appearance of Christ on the Road to Emmaus. Two journeyers are taking the long trek to Emmaus, an ancient town northwest of Jerusalem, while discussing the crucifixion of their Messiah. While wandering, Jesus appears on the road and asks about the events they're discussing but they do not recognize him.

One of the travelers almost rudely asks Jesus, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

Jesus continues to act as though he is unaware of the situation that had unfolded, prompting the disciples to explain the events to him.

When the two travelers prepare to end their night, and it is clear that Jesus was going further, they invited him in and broke bread with him. As he took the bread, and gave it to his disciples their eyes opened as they realized they were in the presence of the risen God. Before more could be said, Jesus disappears as the disciples are left to wonder how they could not have recognized God before them.

I have always found this particular passage to be relevant, because we often have the chance to see God around us, but simply fail to realize it.

Certainly, we are failing to see God in each other as we discuss immigration reform in the United States. Only by letting the stranger in and showing respect for their human dignity will we be able to see God in our lives, the same way the travelers saw Christ at their table.

From a practical standpoint people of faith must recognize that immigration reform underscores two crucial issues: strengthening families, and upward economic mobility.

A more responsible immigration system means more opportunity for struggling families. It is estimated that over 16 million families in the United States have parents of mixed-citizenship?meaning that one parent is a US citizen, and that the other is undocumented. When one or both parents are deported, the children lack a critical support structure that allows them to live up to their full potential. Many of these parents have been waiting decades to earn citizenship, and it is time that we give them the opportunity to give back to America.

Still, immigration reform is about more than keeping families together?it is about ensuring that they have the chance to achieve the American dream. Our undocumented brothers and sisters have long been denied the opportunity to rise up the economic ladder. They have been forced to work multiple low-wage jobs in order to provide for their family. Through a path to citizenship program, we offer them the opportunity to earn more, and in turn allow them to participate more fully in our economy.

We have the opportunity to welcome the stranger in, and share the common meal that is the American experience. In the next few weeks, extreme rhetoric will be used to color these individuals as ill-intentioned criminals. As people of faith we must remember that we too are on a unique journey, together with them, on the road to Emmaus.

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