



# *ONE FAMILY UNDER GOD*

## *BUILDING A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY*

*Monday, October 26, 2015*

**H**ave you ever felt alone? Not “none of my friends are texting me back” alone, or “why didn’t I get invited to that party?” alone. Truly alone, with no one to offer you support, or stand by your side, or shoulder some of your burden?

It's horrible to feel alone. Humans are social beings by nature—in fact, most of creation is. We are intended to be in community. From a religious perspective, we say that people are loved into being, that from the very moment of existence, they are in communion with God.

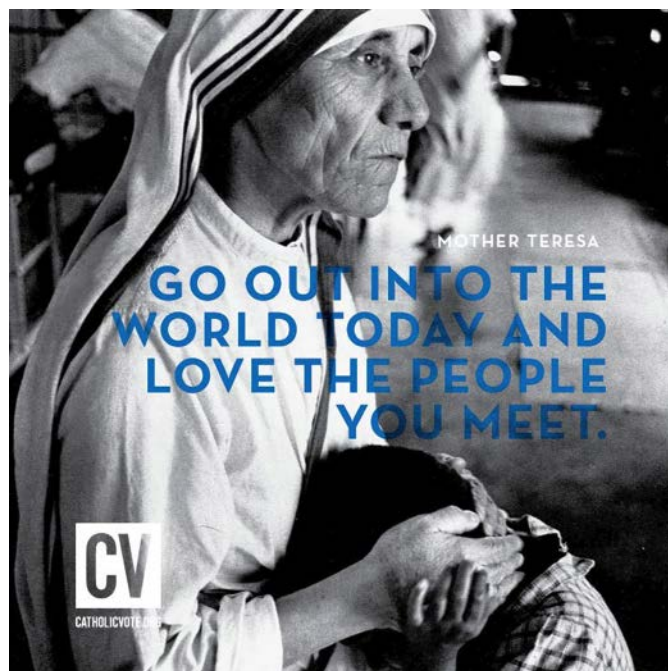
God willed each and every person into existence for a specific purpose, and he did not make any mistakes. From the moment a person comes into being, he or she is loved and willed by God, and will exist forever, in this life and the next, no matter how long his or her life on earth lasts.

It is one thing to talk about being loved by God and created in community. It is quite another to live the daily experience of often feeling alone. The goal, then, is to make the theoretical knowledge of God's loving and constant presence real in our lives, so that when we are lonely, we find authentic comfort in our friendship with Jesus.

Look around you. Who in the world do you think feels most alone? People who are dying? Children without families? Undocumented immigrants? Women experiencing unexpected pregnancies? The very poor, searching for the basic necessities of life for their families?

Most of the problems in our culture stem from people feeling alone. When our communities break down, and we become selfish, people get hurt.

We are better together. In Catholic Social Teaching, we talk about the concept of solidarity. Humans are interdependent beings. Solidarity embraces interdependence as a gift, something that allows us to live our common humanity by cherishing each other and working for the good of the others as we also work for



our own good. In doing this, we use our gifts to make the world a better place for all people, including ourselves.

*Solidarity is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.*

Saint John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*

One very clear expression of solidarity in our culture is the way we treat immigrants to our country. There are some who suggest that people without proper documentation should not be allowed to live in the U.S., and should be kept from our country and its opportunities.

The truth is that America is a nation of immigrants. We are one country formed by people of every race and culture in the world. The United States was founded on Christian principles, including welcoming strangers to our land, and offering them the opportunities of employment and security for their families.

Right now in the U.S., we have a broken immigration system. There are good people on both sides of the debate who believe they know how to fix it. But we all agree that it needs to be fixed.



Every day, parents are deported and families are ripped apart. Undocumented people are living in the shadows, afraid every time they leave their homes. And people who have been here for years, contributing to our communities, are unable to receive the same benefits that we do.

*For all its limitations, our national immigration policy has always tried to keep parents and children together and to reunite families that are separated by our borders. Not anymore.*

*In the name of enforcing our laws, now we are breaking up families. One in four deportees are being removed from an intact family. We are talking about souls, not statistics. We are talking about families. We're talking about fathers and husbands who, with no warning, will not be coming home for dinner tonight—and who may not see their families again for a decade at least. We are talking about women suddenly left as single mothers to raise their children in poverty. We are talking about a state policy that results in making many children virtually "orphans," to be raised on the streets or in foster care.*

*This is what the immigration issue is doing to our national soul. We need to stop ourselves. We can do better. American has always been a nation of justice and law. But we are also a people of compassion and common sense. What we're doing right now betrays our values and makes our country weaker and more vulnerable.*

*We are a better people than this. We can find a better way.*

Archbishop José H. Gomez  
*Immigration and the Next America:  
Renewing the Soul of our Nation*

What is our role here? There is a lot we can do on a personal level, while we pray that our legislators make laws in keeping with the dignity of all people. We look to the example of Jesus, who taught us love, mercy, and compassion. Exemplifying him means seeing ourselves in others, recognizing our common humanity, and reaching out to accompany them in their suffering.

Together, we are working for a just world—a world where every life is valued because every life has infinite dignity as a creation of God.

We should be very proud that the Catholic Church continues to take the lead in offering assistance and services to immigrants, as it has done since the foundation of our country. Based on our unshakable belief in the dignity of every person, and the right to pursue personal fulfillment and to create a sustainable, peaceful life for their families, we welcome immigrants into our churches, illustrating the Catholic, universal nature of our faith. Every month, churches in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles celebrate the Mass in 42 different languages.

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– Archbishop José H. Gomez

*The Church is a mother with an open heart. She knows how to welcome and accept, especially those in need of greater care, those in greater difficulty. The church, as desired by Jesus, is the home of hospitality...welcoming the different cultures, of which our earth is so richly blessed.*

Pope Francis, 2015

If we understand that we really are better together—and this not just a snappy catchphrase—because we were created to love and to care for other people, then issues of solidarity take a central role in our decision-making. We begin looking at how all of our choices, big and small, impact others around us for better or for worse. We look at the issues of public policy through the lens of their impact on the common good. Does a particular law positively or negatively affect those in our communities, in our churches, in our families? How does it affect the most vulnerable, the poor, the sick, the immigrants, the orphans?



As Christians, community and solidarity are not extrinsic to our lived experience of the faith. Instead, they are central to discipleship. As Jesus said, "When you did this to the least ones, you did it to me."



*“When people meet me, they want to know what culture I come from or where my family is from. They want to put me in a box or assign me a label. So the question of ‘what are you’ has always made me feel defensive of who I am and how I’m presented in the world.”*

Shirley Acuna, 22,  
Peruvian-American



*“When others ask, ‘Where are you from?’ I tend to respond with ‘New Jersey.’ Usually, they are never satisfied with that answer because for them, it does not explain why I have the last name I have, why my hair is so conspicuously curly, why my skin is brown, and why I am able to speak Spanish.”*

Alex Santana, 21,  
Spanish- and Dominican-American



*“I think that where you are at the present is the most important, but at the same time it’s essential to not let go of where you’ve been. You should not have to let go of your roots to be a part of American society.”*

Aynee, 22,  
British- and Indian-American

All above quotes are from “Children of Immigrants”  
Photographs by Quetzal Maucci, NY Times Sunday Review, Sept 21, 2014

## DISCUSSION

1. What is at the root of most social problems?
2. What is it about the way humans are made that make us better together?
3. How would you describe solidarity? Can you give an example of a time that you practiced solidarity with someone in need?
4. Why is our immigration system in the United States broken?
5. Good people can disagree on how to fix immigration in the US. But, what is our moral obligation toward all people, whether we know them or they are strangers?