

**PRAYER TO INTRODUCE RESOLUTION DURING FRANCISCAN FEDERATION'S
ANNUAL CONFERENCE - 2009**

We are a nation of immigrants.

We come from Mexico and the Philippines, from Central America, Ireland, Ethiopia and Iraq. We come to escape poverty and violence, fear, war discrimination, political suppression and economic hardship. We leave behind parents and children and the skies of our homelands. We bring with us languages, photographs, telephone numbers, backpacks, stories, and hopes. We have walked day and night through the desert to cross the frontera. We have waited on the far side for papers to go through. We have hopped trains, seen companions fall, have put our trust in, and been abandoned by coyotes---human smugglers. We are the ones who have arrived.

We have been called illegals, mojudos, aliens and terrorists. We are rounded up at work leaving our children stranded. We are imprisoned and deported from the cities where we have lived for decades. We are guarded against at the border by barbed wire, dongs pressure sensors and armed guards, as if we are an army to be feared. Yet often, we are the ones who live in fear.

We are math teachers and dishwashers, carpenters, translators, painters of portraits and of housed. We pick the apples in Yakima, Washington. We wash your dishes in restaurants in Minnesota. We rebuild houses in Louisiana in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. We pay taxes out of our salaries. We send our children to school, wanting them to learn and succeed and to be safe. Neither do we forget the family members we have left in our birth countries: we work hard to support them as well. But we live here now: in big cities and small towns, in migrant camps, in apartment buildings and bedroom communities. In some places we are invisible. But look for us---we are here. We are twelve million strong.

We sought and found opportunities in this country, and in return we have contributed our labor, our children, the rich textures of our cultures, and a chance for each of us---we and you---to learn compassion and wisdom through encountering the stranger. But we must be strangers no longer. As brothers and sisters we affirm our humanity, dignity and value and thank all religious communities that treat us with respect and are working so passionately for us.

(Annunciation House, El Paso, TX)

(Immigrants continue to speak) As your brothers and sisters we join the extended Franciscan Family in the Care of Creation. We are there because you are there.

We care about Earth as it affects the poorest of our brothers and sisters. It is understandable that Pope John Paul II made St. Francis the patron saint of ecology in 1979. The Holy Father saw that the grace of a particular charism could best meet the daunting challenge of helping to heal a creation. We, as a family of Franciscans have a responsibility and an ability to care for creation and together walk gently on the earth.

Let us pray together:

Creator of all, we join our minds and hearts with the beings of our planet earth. We recognize the deep bond that we have with each created being. We rejoice in your sacred presence among us and within us. Divine oneness we celebrate the goodness, the beauty, the talents, and the spirituality of all beings. We stand in solidarity with all who suffer in any way. Rekindle our love, revitalize our compassion, and renew our awareness of the unity we share with all beings.

I am the veiled women of Iran;

I am the forgotten one on the streets of Calcutta

I am the water that is being exploited.

I am the sunflower reaching to God.

I am the weaver of colorful cloth in South America.

I am the village shaman in the South Pacific Islands.

I am a bird soaring in sky creation.

I am the night sky lighting your way in darkness.

I am the rancher in unfenced lands.

I am the waitress in a rural café.

I am a creature slithering along the earth.

I am a tree reaching to the sky.

(Adapted from Out of the Ordinary by Joyce Rupp)

Loving Creator, you do not speak in words, your voice is the voice of Light. The morning sun speaks of your warmth, the newness you bring to each day through the Gospel of Creation. You made visible your Light through the lives of Francis and Clare, may they continue to be beacons for our Franciscan family. Beacons of energy that magnify our response to justice, right-relationship, peace and awe and gratitude we have for Earth's abundant gifts. Bless us with courage, faithfulness and the stamina of Francis and Clare. We make our prayer that is holy. Amen.