

Covington SNDs March for Immigration Reform

The newly formed Covington JPIC group, Immigration Action, initiated their activities by participating in an immigration march and rally in Newport, Kentucky on September 18. The Diocese of Covington and several other Greater Cincinnati organizations organized the event, which began with a prayer service at Holy Trinity School. From there, the group marched to the Peace Bell in Newport, singing and proclaiming human rights for immigrants and a desire for immigration reform. As the group approached the Peace Bell, a Guatemalan choir animated the crowd and participants sang and danced, invoking the Holy Spirit.

A young woman who was undocumented but now has a temporary visa gave an inspiring testimony. She explained that she came to the United States when she was six years old and has spent nineteen years in the country. Her documentation is temporary, but she explained how it has helped her to continue studying because with it, she can enter a university. She thanked her mother for loving her enough to take risks to give her a better life. Then the Peace Bell rang, long, solemn, vibrating tones. The group closed with a song and then dispersed.

Jan Ferguson, a Notre Dame Associate and chairperson of Immigration Action, attended the rally with Sisters Maria Francine Stacy, Mary Rachel Nerone, Jean Marie Hoffman, Mary Lourita Warken, Cormarie Rebhan, Mary Ruth Lubbers, Mary Pat Bruemmer, and Jan Marie Villalobos. After the march she said, "There were so many families telling their stories of how they came here to find a better life for their children. A lot of these people came from places with gangs and you either went along with the gang or you got killed."

The purpose of the march was to bring attention to the issues and the reality that immigrants face. "You can look at any time in our history," Ferguson said, "and there was always a group of immigrants not wanted. We know that's true today."

Strangers no longer

The notion of an unwanted people in our society is what prompted the Notre Dame community to create Immigration Action. At the fall 2016 Covington Province Day, sisters and associates formed three committees interested in social justice issues. One is for water, one is dedicated to human trafficking, and a third focuses on immigration.

"It is important that we pay attention to immigration," Ferguson said. "The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) wrote a pastoral letter titled 'Strangers No Longer' and in that letter they equate our dealings with immigrants as a Right to Life issue. These individuals face death and dire consequences if they don't leave their home country. We are called by the Bible to welcome strangers and to help those that can't take care of themselves."

