Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you today. I don’t know why the organizers of the conference chose me as one of the speakers of this conference on “Eucharist without borders”. My experience with the Eucharist is somewhat new—I became Catholic in 2006 — but I’m happy to share with you what the Eucharist is for me and give you some practical ways for taking the Eucharist to the world where God has placed you.

You might have already guessed from my accent that I’m not from this country. I was born in Peru in a very small rural town called Talavera. This is the place where at age 7 I had noticed some things that did not make sense. I was brushing my teeth and looking at the mountain that faced my house, when I saw several little people moving from one side of the mountain to the other as they were coming down to the city, and in about an hour and a half they arrived in town. Later I realized that these girls were walking such a distance to come to school and they were my classmates that walked that distance without shoes. Here I was with running water, comfortable at home, a few blocks from school and wearing shoes. Later at age 17 in high school, I remember vividly how hundreds of peasants carrying their farmer tools singing and shouting for agricultural reform came from the mountains and assembled at the central park of town. As a little girl I asked questions to my parents, but their answers were not satisfactory to me: “The Church is involved in spiritual things, not in material things.. The government is
the one who has to build roads, hospitals, etc.” Well the answers to my questions came in this scene with the farmers shouting for justice for agricultural reform. The plantation owners feared their power. This was the beginning of my involvement in the socialist movement in Peru. Although I was not affiliated with a specific group I was involved in social change. Some of my friends literally gave their lives for structural change. They belonged to the shining path movement.

It was in the darkest time in my life when I encountered God for the first time in 2005. Please don’t get me wrong. I come from a very religious family. I read the bible cover to cover before age 15. At 12 years old I was already a Sunday school teacher. I tried to be a good Christian girl and later a good and practiced social justice activist.

**Encounter with God and encounter with society**

I believe that being a Christian is more radical than being a socialist. Why? Because as Christian I’m called to be transformed daily as an individual and to be connected with society and God’s creation in order to bring the reign of God to the world wherever we are. In my personal opinion, transforming society without transforming myself, is not complete. Society and I are one. As a Christian I’m called to relate to God as an individual and as community. From this platform I’m connected to God, therefore to all God’s creation. I should be actively engaged so that all systems and structures in society work towards the common good, so all God’s children’s basic needs are met and human rights are respected. Sometimes it is easier to seek freedom from societal systems, but still be oppressed inside ourselves. Since I became Christian I’ve been learning how Christ invites me daily
to be freed from the chains of self-righteousness, the chains of power, the chains of possessions, the chains of individualism and so many other chains I keep discovering in myself continuously. The amazing thing now is that I’m equipped to drop those chains, to be liberated, to resurrect with Christ anytime I choose. I pray for the grace to receive daily the many freedoms offered to me. For me the Eucharist is a daily encounter with God’s love and presence and the source of this liberating grace. How much I long to go to Mass!! I carry my Magnificat (an aid for daily Mass) all the time because I need help reading the Scriptures. I need to see the words so I capture the message God has for us today. My daughter has Down’s syndrome so I need to be very concrete when I explain things to her. On Sundays when we go together to church I remind her that we’re going to the large sanctuary and when we leave after having received the Eucharist we’ve become little sanctuaries for all the places we go. What are you saying to me today, Lord? What are you saying to your little ones, the undocumented community? To our society? These are usually my words to God before I go to Mass or when I read the Scriptures of the day early in the morning or at night..... God’s voice, words, message is so clear. It is fresh and alive. I can hear. We can hear! The Psalms are just awesome! To my undocumented immigrant brothers and sisters I keep asking them.. Did you read the scriptures/the Psalms today? Last week? They are words of hope... God is vividly encouraging us to continue with the journey. God is with the lowly, with the poor, with the one who is suffering the impact of unjust laws.. With the mothers and fathers who are losing their children because of deportation.. with the wives and husbands, sons and daughters who are separated....
Before the new changes came about in the missal I asked my priest friends to use as the final blessing: “go in peace to praise and serve the Lord”... now they have a better one that really expresses why we go to Mass. One of the final blessings is “go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life” To me these words summarize the purpose of the Eucharist. We go to Mass to encounter our God. To renew our baptismal call so we can go to the world to take with us the Christ who lives through us.

The Eucharist is an exhilarating experience for me.

**Juan Diego – Guadalupe and Mary of Nazareth**

I’m also new to Catholic cultural traditions. Our Lady of Guadalupe was introduced to me in 2006. Since then I have been reflecting on the amazing story of Juan Diego—the poor peasant to whom Guadalupe appeared and gave a command. What struck me is that Guadalupe appears during a time of darkness politically, economically and culturally. The indigenous people of Mexico were invaded by the Spanish conquistadors. They were forced to learn another language, another religion. It was a time of oppression. This situation is very similar to the one with the Roman Empire. There were new laws to follow, taxation and census. The people of Israel were oppressed. It was in this context that Gabriel appears to Mary, a young woman of a small rural town, but with a strong faith in God. Similarly, Our Lady of Guadalupe appears to Juan Diego while he was going to Mass. Juan Diego was eager to encounter God in the Eucharist. This new religion was a gift to him. From the oppression and darkness of the invaders, the gift of the Eucharist was given to him.
I’m making this comparison because I do believe that our undocumented community is also experiencing the impact of oppression and unjust realities. Here are few examples:

- During 2005 and 2007, they felt there was hope so they came from underground to the streets in various cities in our country. Basically they came out. They showed their faces believing there was a possibility for immigration reform. They were wrong. Elected officials were fearful of losing votes so they did not pass the law. Now they are more underground.
- The growth of anti-immigration laws: Arizona, Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Indiana, etc.
- The increase in deportations: in the last two years around 400,000. Therefore the separation of families: from the detention center in Chicago, 50,000 immigrants were deported in the last 5 years, and we estimate that around 80,000 children were separated from their parents.
- The increase of violence in Mexico: 50,000 people had been killed in violence blamed on organized crime in the last 5 years.
- The fear of E-verify: there is a threat that employers on a national level might be required to check the social security of immigrant workers.

As you can see, these figures paint a picture of despair as immigrants are punished with these actions from legislators and people who see them as a threat to this country. It reminds me clearly of how the people of Israel were perceived and treated, and of how God called Moses for their liberation from Egypt. It seems there is no light in these figures, but I continuously remind my undocumented brothers and sisters that **God is at work even in the darkest times**. He is. Where are the Juan Diegos today? Where are the Marys of
Nazareth? I say. Is God engaged in our plight? Yes, She is. Maybe God is also calling you as Juan Diego and Mary to engage in the transformation of this country. *Maybe our faith tested by this darkness is our gift to this country.*

Another story that I keep repeating to my immigrant brothers and sisters is the story of Joshua. The people of Israel had a promise “they will be liberated from Egypt. They needed to go and remain on the journey.” There were signs and wonders on the journey. The promise this time was that God would enter into the city of Jericho. But Jericho was surrounded by walls. How could they enter this city that had a fortress around it? Joshua and the people of Israel went around and around seven times. On the seventh time they sounded their horns and the walls fell so they entered into Jericho. God gave them victory!

I have been sharing this story many times for 6 years in a row. I wish I could say this is the last year. God will destroy the walls of fear and blindness of this country. Of course how many times I asked myself, why my Lord did the law not pass when it was so close? The DREAM Act only by 2 votes!! Don’t you have compassion for your people who are suffering? After many years I’m beginning to understand that maybe God is first giving us an opportunity, both communities – the immigrant community and the native-born community – to know God and to receive him in new ways. Let me briefly outline this:

- **To the immigrant community:** to find God in the darkness. Who is the only one we can trust? We did trust our elected officials, but they deceived us. We trusted in our power. We organized ourselves with our unions, our organizing groups, our churches, our associations, but that did not count. Now that our families are separated because of deportation and detention, to whom can we go and present our suffering? Now that we’re fearful of e-
verify or ICE every time we go to work, to whom can we go? I believe God is speaking clearly and loudly to the immigrant community to trust in God, to call for his protection, to walk closely with our father and mother who receive the prayer of our suffering, the uncertainty of our legal status. The same God of Israel who accompanied His people through the desert is offering His presence and companionship to the immigrant community while they journey for freedom, for dignity, for respect. As a result of living closely with a God of love, the immigrant community is also given an opportunity to love our enemies. Praying for the ones who hate us. For elected officials who are against immigrants.
This is what is happening in Chicago. Soon I will share about Pastoral Migratoria or Immigrant to Immigrant Ministry, but let me tell you about a great story of praying for our enemies. Sheriff Mark Curran of Lake County Illinois was our state’s equivalent of Sheriff Arpayo. I remember Sheriff Curran hiring new police force and buying new cars in 2006-2007 to enforce 287g in a town where 70% of population are Hispanics. He came to one of the archdiocesan pastoral council meetings and talked so badly about undocumented immigrants that one of our leaders of our Priests for Justice for Immigrants network was embarrassed that this Sheriff had called himself Catholic. We have a Hispanic parish called Blessed Sacrament which has been saying Mass for immigration reform on Fridays since 2006. We also have a prayer vigil at the detention center every Friday 7:15 am since Dec. 2006, no matter if the weather is 10 degrees below zero or 100 degrees. We have 30 parishes that made a long term commitment to pray for immigration reform until the law passes (2-7 years!). Early last year, we
learned that Sheriff Curran had a conversion. He began reading the website of justice for immigrants and meeting with a couple priests. He decided to do a personal “immersion experience” for a week in the detention center of his jurisdiction. He was transformed. Sheriff Curran is the “Paul of our days”. He shared his testimony during a tea party assembly and now talks openly about the connection between pro-life and pro-immigrants. You can find Sheriff Curran’s testimony through Youtube on our website.

We need to believe that God is at work. Just recently our senator who voted against the DREAM Act suffered a serious stroke. I challenged our Pastoral Migratoria leaders to organize prayers for his recovery. Sincere prayers for him. Maybe they can have a display a banner by his office that says “Immigrants praying for your recovery”. A group of us are praying and fasting for him. During Lent I sent him a card.

--To the Native born community: I believe that this community is also given an opportunity to see Christ in the undocumented community who is walking the way of the cross. To be the Veronicas and Simons along the route...to encounter our immigrant brothers and sisters and accompany them in their journey. To receive them, to embrace them, to advocate for them. The Eucharist invites us continuously to come to Christ as we are and leave the place of worship to be the body of Christ in this world. If we only hear God’s voice and respond to it, we could bring good tidings to the poor and bring liberation to the oppressed.

What would Our Lady of Guadalupe do? What would Mary of Nazareth do? In both instances, they were very engaged in the political, economic and cultural realities of the time to bring liberation and freedom from the
oppression of sins that permeate these structures. **We are called to live our faith in the streets of our hearts and the streets of our cities.**

What to do

Let me share with you potential ways you can be engaged in the plight of undocumented immigrants:

- **Know your neighbor**: get personal. If you are living in a parish or area where there are immigrants, try to know them as individuals, as families, as persons with their stories. I have been working with immigrants since 1986 and then since 2005 with the Justice for Immigrants, but I was so busy with adults and families that I never had the chance to meet and spend time with DREAMers until last year. Of course I supported their cause, I rallied their plight, etc. but when I met Marisol, Emanuel, Paco, Gabi and Victor the issue became personal. The issue was not in my mind or my strategies, the issue was in my heart. This is what Jesus calls us to do. He was a champion in relationships. Relationships are the blueprint of human nature. Our souls and hearts touch each other in relationships. I love when the scriptures says “to see with the eyes of our hearts”. We need to see things with our souls and hear with our hearts!

If you’re not from an immigrant parish, find out about a parish that has one. I can assure you, you will find ways to know people as people. Pray and God will bring you people because God wants to meet them with you and through you. He wants to touch them. She
wants to listen to them. Your presence and faith are already gifts that are offered.

- **Worship together:** what a great gift we already share! Our faith. We are sitting at the same table with our Lord as our father. Even being present in a Mass in their language (Spanish, Polish, Korean, Tagalo, Vietnamese, etc) is already a sign of your open spirit to honor their culture, their faith, and their traditions. Learn their faith traditions. Each ethnic group has their own saints and their feasts. Of course, among Mexicans the most popular tradition is Our Lady of Guadalupe. If you don’t know, learn about this tradition. You just need to be ready to participate in Las mananitas at 4 or 5 am!!

Immigrants are rich in their traditions and they are willing to share with you. Participate in Posadas (seeking shelter) during Christmas time. What a perfect tradition to highlight the journey of immigrants now. We developed an archdiocesan directory of Posadas. Out of 140 Hispanic congregations, around 90 conduct Posadas. We have been working with these parishes to make the connection between the journey of Mary and Joseph seeking Posada and the journey of undocumented immigrants in this country seeking “legislative” shelter. We provide tools that make this connection.

- **Identify their needs locally:** at this point I want to introduce our Immigrant to Immigrant Ministry/Pastoral Migratoria in Chicago. If you would be in Chicago, you could choose among 40 Hispanic and 6 Polish parishes to use your gifts in this ministry.
Pastoral Migratoria is a ministry of empowerment. It was born as a response to a question that was raised after immigration reform did not pass in 2007. Immigrants asked the question, “now that immigration reform did not pass, what could we do to assist each other?” Agentes de Pastoral Migratoria become engaged in service and justice actions in their local faith communities. It is a leadership ministry through which reflection from the immigrant perspective is critical. Immigrants are writing their own psalms, they are reflecting on the Scriptures from their personal experience as immigrants in this country. Leaders of Pastoral Migratoria also are organizing Sunday informational tables, workshops on immigration, labor, domestic violence, substance abuse, housing etc. and bringing resources to the community such as legal clinics, health fairs, etc. They are accompanying families that are separated because of detention or deportation. They are forming “support teams” among separated families. This ministry could use your professional skills in many ways. We need lawyers, social workers, psychologist, counselors, doctors, nurses, accountants, Information technology professionals, etc. Please come to Chicago!

We’re developing this model within the parish structure to share with other dioceses in the near future.

However, if you reach out to an immigrant congregation, they are always looking for ways to learn English so ESL, GED volunteers are critical. If the leadership has a vision, they can organize workshops on various issues and seek your expertise. In many cases, once they
learn you’re available they will organize. I’d recommend you explore and reach out to the appropriate person. Pray and God will lead you.

- **Bless them:** Remember how the general public environment is currently. People need to know that there are native born brothers and sisters that are with them in the journey. This is powerful. Be explicit. You might have been engaged already, but formalize it in a statement, your presence during announcement time at Mass, a plaque for their congregation expressing support in the journey, etc. We have a network called Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, with representatives of 59 religious orders. As you know most sisters are elderly. They decided to have a page in the local immigrant newspaper expressing support to immigrants and had all the order names in the paper. They also went to the parish and during the announcement time they gave words of encouragement. To my surprise one teenager came to Sr. Jean Marie saying she was moved about this action and would like to learn more about religious life!!!!

Organize your group. Any group that can voice support in this time of dryness is like water in the desert. It is oil of healing. We can bless each other. I was pleased to learn that the Hispanic bishops in the country sent a similar message during the time of Our Lady of Guadalupe. You don’t have to be a bishop to do that. Your voice and solidarity are welcome.

Since our office was established in 2009 I have been visiting over 80 immigrant parishes, usually meeting with pastors and some leaders.
Then I realized that the large community needed to be visited too, so since the middle of last year I’ve been going once a month to worship in an immigrant parish, where I request the leaders of Pastoral Migratoria to assure there’s time for me to speak during announcements. It is in these 2 minutes where I bless the community. I encourage them to continue the journey and remind them that our God of history is leading the way even in the darkness. I hope you are encouraged to reach out to immigrants so they know you are walking with them.

• **ADVOCACY**

  **Anti-immigrant legislation.** If your local community is exploring to support - *anti immigrant legislation* at the municipality or state level, raise your voice. Again you can do so as a small group of parishioners, or as a concerned group of people of faith in your area. They need to know that you oppose such oppressive legislations. Organize letter writing, phone chains; use the social media to reach them. Organize and mobilize. Remember that our God of justice is with you. *Let the rage of God against unjust legislations be with you.* If your faith group or your parish is interested in learning how to create legislative networks to reach elected officials, contact Catholic Relief Services. They have developed a very good system to support your efforts through their regional office. They can provide direct assistance to you. Of course you can also reach out to the national Justice for Immigrants.
**Elected officials.** Target federal elected officials who are silent or against immigrants. Organize prayer vigils at their local offices. The presence of your group would send the message. You’ve probably sent letters, e-mails in the past and he/she disregarded them. This time be in their face until you get what you intended. We need to be thorns to bother them, to challenge them... until they grant you a meeting or respond to your request. Prayer vigils are powerful because they create consciousness as long as they are consistent with a clear message and expected outcomes. Interfaith vigils are good strategies. Always try to work with the media, especially if you want to highlight something.

**Detention Centers:** If your local community has a *detention center* and they do not have pastoral care services, raise your voice. In our state of Illinois undocumented immigrants in detention did not have the right to be visited by a priest, rabbi or imam. They just did not have the same right as other criminal offenders. Our two Sisters of Mercy, Pat Murphy and JoAnn Persch, who started the Friday prayer vigil at the detention center, took the leadership for passing a state legislation (process of 1 year). This legislation allows us to visit undocumented immigrants being held in the detention center. Now we have around 80 interfaith pastoral care workers who participate in this ministry. Every Tuesday a team of 10 or so visit around 90 detainees. On the very day of their deportation, we provide pastoral care at the facilities that hold them before they go to the airport. We also provide support to families who come to say good bye to their
love ones. We pray inside the buses with deportees... we bless them.
We provide information on Casas del Migrante that are located in the
borders towns in Mexico.... Can you see? **We observed, we reflected,**
**we mobilized.** We asked the God of power and justice to open the
minds of elected officials... we worked with interfaith groups,
grassroots and community organizing groups— it was the faith
community that took leadership.

I share this with you to encourage you to **observe**: find out what is
going on in your local community, your region, your ICE district, your
state.. Pray and act. God wants to embrace people in detention,
deportation and their families. God is ready for things to happen.
Make things happen. Bring justice to the poor.

**-working in an interfaith setting is the best way to go.** We are
pleased that the Catholic community usually takes leadership on
issues of immigration, but we need to invite or join efforts with other
faith communities. In Chicago for almost two years, we are working
this way. We’re learning from each other, calling God with different
names in different formats, but being one family.

To find out if the detention centers in your state offer pastoral care
to undocumented immigrants visit **Detention Watch Network.**
Google and you will find out. It is a good resource.

**- Write letters to the editor:** as you know the anti-immigrant
community has been very well funded and their voices are strong
especially with elected officials. I do believe that our God of justice
and compassion is ready to show Her voice through you. Reach out
to the editorial board, write an open letter. As individuals or as a group.

On What topic? The issue of separation of families is a moral imperative about which people of faith should raise their voices. I personally go to the detention center at 4:00 am every Friday and provide support to families and deportees. I have had the chance to talk to them every Friday for over 3-4 years now. ICE released data last year saying that 55% of people deported were criminal cases and 45% minor cases. If ICE is saying this, I can tell you based on our experience the 45% is in reality at least 70% of people who are in this category. How many times I’ve heard cases in which a minor traffic violation was the cause of deportation. Because of secure communities, we know that such minor violations are being connected with previous immigration issues (for example, not showing up at a hearing) to criminalize their cases. We need to raise our voice, saying that Secure Communities is separating families. These minor violations are civil issues and should be handled as civil cases NOT CRIMINAL.

- **Pastoral Care in Detention Centers**

  In Matthew 25 we read that we need to welcome the stranger, but it also says we need to visit prisoners. We meet Christ in them.

  In my first year going to pray on the buses at our detention center I noticed that some men – probably the most dangerous ones – were placed in the first row. They had chains on their hands, their feet and
their waist like everyone on the bus. They also had tattoos all over. It seems they were in jail for many years. They might have completed their sentences and now they had to be deported. I was scared at the beginning. I prayed to God what to do in these cases.... “You don’t make distinctions, Elena....ALL are my children.. Remember what happened when I was at the cross....I loved them... so you love them.”

The next time I was not as scared. I shared with them the same message as I always do. On a couple of occasions, the ones in the front seats had tears in their eyes. We have a priest who always sings and rallies for the “Chivas”-a very popular soccer team in Mexico.. They clap, they laugh, they cry...

-Visit detainees- Did you know that even in detention centers they cannot talk face to face with their family or anyone who visits them? They love to be in touch with regular folks. They look forward to seeing people who show them that we care and respect them.

Find out if your state or municipality has a legislation that allows you to participate in pastoral care. I heard that in some states people in detention do have access to pastoral care through the regular prison ministry. So join with the prison ministry in your diocese or find out if you can visit them.

I understand some priests can only celebrate Mass with detainees. So go and attend Mass to be with them. Help the priest as his acolyte if that is the only way to visit detainees. Be creative. Pray and God will
lead you and open the doors to what to do. Remember God wants to visit them through you, with you.

-Organize prayer vigil: if you know there is a detention center, organize a prayer vigil once a month during the liturgical year, especially in Lent or Advent. I believe this act of solidarity says a lot to detainees, their families, ICE and jail administrators. To detainees: We’re saying we are with you. We are accompanying you. To families: you are not alone. We understand your pain. To ICE and Jail administrators: we citizens of this country we are watching human rights of detainees.

-Court watch: Did you know that court hearings for detainees are held without their families present on many occasions? And that during their hearings, detainees are interviewed by the judges using video cameras? Once we learned this, the interfaith committee on detainees developed a daily program where anyone who wants to participate in a hearing could go and “represent” a detainee being interviewed. This way the judge is more likely to show some respect and to see that the detainee has someone who cares and is watching over the proceedings on their behalf. It is lonely and more frightening to be interviewed in court without someone who is on your side. You have to remember, for the majority of folks in detention, their families are undocumented. Their family members are not able to go because you need to show documentation to enter the federal building.
EDUCATE YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

Here are some examples how you can create awareness in your faith community or groups you belong.

- Sunday bulletin announcements: If your parish has a justice and peace committee or human concerns group, work with them to create a group dedicated to immigration issues, or otherwise begin one on your own. One of our newest networks in Chicago is called Immigration Parish Contacts, which is currently in 127 parishes. One of their responsibilities is to make sure that bulletin editors in their parishes print the monthly announcement we send them. We began this strategy by sending ads to bulletin editors in 2005, but just last year we changed from a “data approach” to a “human story and faith approach”. We send short personal stories of “faith and immigrant stories” with great success. Collect faith-based stories of immigrants and develop an ad. We found that parishes are printing more because they are faith oriented short stories. They are powerful. Visit our website to see some samples.

- Invite an immigrant music group to your parish. A lot of immigrant parishes have youth music groups that are ready to share their music in other parishes. The DREAMers could share their personal stories during announcement time, or host a coffee hour after Mass to introduce parishioners to the DREAMers and begin the dialogue. My recommendation is always start with common ground: sharing our faith.
• Organize potlucks to celebrate ethnic heritages. We have simple questions that will allow open dialogue.

• Organize book reviews, videos. The PBS series Frontline has a documentary called “lost in detention” that is outstanding in bringing to light the current realities of immigrants in detention centers.

• Liturgy: make sure that your parish prays for immigration reform, separation of families, human rights in detention centers, Casas del Migrante. I pray that God raises poets, song writers so we can express with songs and poetry the cry of immigrants. The children who cry for their father or mother who were deported. For youth who had to leave this country to a country they don’t know. We need art that expresses the pain, the oppression, the suffering of the undocumented community that is walking the long journey -- the way of the cross. How beautiful it would be if a parish community would accompany them in prayers and actions of solidarity! I envision seeing murals, photography, drawings, liturgical dance, theater plays, more movies and documentaries. Art speaks to our hearts and our souls.

Wouldn’t it be great if religious education programs highlight the “journey of undocumented immigrants” as a present-day example of the journey of the Israelites leaving Egypt to the Promised Land? Wouldn’t be great to see parishes organizing prayer services, Masses, pilgrimages to bring to God the plight of immigrants in our midst?
• Organize a visit to a detention center facility. Even if they don’t allow you to go inside. Just being close to the physical space will open people’s hearts to learn about the reality of immigrants in our midst

• Take advantage of Migration Week, the first or second week in January. Did you know that the Pope releases every year a statement on migrants in the world and that he asks all bishops conferences in the world to observe Migration Week? I didn’t know about this until a few years ago. So now we take advantage of this week. We promote the Pope’s message as well as our local bishop’s message—this year the bishops of our state of Illinois released a statement. We ask our Immigration Parish Contacts to visit the detention center in January as part of Migration Month. They showed videos, invited DREAMers to give testimonies in their parishes, and they began a sister relationship with immigrant parishes. Your bishop is called to do something for Migration Week. Volunteer to help.

Please let me finish this long sharing with one particular image of the Eucharist that was the beginning of my conversion. John Paul II – in his exhortation in 2000 called Ecclesia in America, or Church in America—said that the Eucharist expresses two dynamics that are alive and real: the host and the guest. It is Christ who is the host in the Eucharist. We are the guest. When we receive the Eucharist, we become the host. That is why the Mass means “to be sent” to the world to be the host to ALL people. So when we host undocumented immigrants we are hosting Christ and they themselves are becoming
host to others... This is the amazing presence of the reign of God in our society. We are transformed-liberated from our own chains and we transform the sinful structures of our society bringing justice, solidarity, peace, dignity, respect, and liberation.

*We’re agents of change. We’re Christ’s hands and feet, eyes and heart today!* Peace be with you!!

Elena Segura  
Director, Office for Immigrant Affairs  
Archdiocese of Chicago

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