



National Catholic Student Coalition

45 Lovett Avenue † Newark, DE 19711
www.catholicstudent.org † ncsc@catholicstudent.org

NCSC/RES/2009[2]

STATEMENT - Solidarity with Migrant Farmworkers

Whereas:

- The National Catholic Student Coalition (NCSC) is committed to actively participating in the Roman Catholic Church and to representing U.S. Catholic students in national and international forums;
- The NCSC believes strongly in the dignity and worth of all people, including the dignity of the worker.

Acknowledging that:

- “The economy exists to serve the human person, not the other way around.
- Economic life should be shaped by moral principles and ethical norms.
- Economic choices should be measured by whether they enhance or threaten human life, human dignity, and human rights.
- A fundamental concern must be support for the family and the well-being of children. The moral measure of any economy is how the weakest are faring.”^[1]
- As recent as 2002, “Half of all farmworkers earn less than \$7,500 per year and half of all farmworker families earn less than \$11,000 per year, far below the 2002 U.S. poverty level of \$18,100 for a family of four.”^[2]
- Migrant farmworkers, especially young adults, are left with little options in their home countries forcing them to see economic opportunities in another country. However, the success of young migrants largely depends on the host country’s policies to feel welcomed into the society of his or her host country.
- The systemic poverty of underdevelopment in the home countries of migrant farmworkers must be addressed so that future generations will not be forced to leave their families in order to seek a more sustainable economic opportunity elsewhere because they have no better alternatives.
- Psalms 74:21 says, “Let not the oppressed turn back in shame; may the poor and needy praise your name.” Our Catholic faith demands that we strive to make this a reality.

Aware that:

- The NCSC is the voice of Catholic collegians in the USA, but also seeks to empower those who have no voice in society.
- In January 1986, an NCSC resolution on refugees was sponsored by the Catholic Campus Ministries of the Diocese of Brownsville, Texas at the second annual national conference in Thibodaux, Louisiana. ^[3]
- Young migrant workers suffer because they often are overlooked, unseen, and invisible.



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- Our support for organizations like the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Immokalee, Florida where migrants who pick tomatoes organize for more just wages, some having received awards from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) for their persistence to seek justice, is part of the way that we can live out the Catholic Social Teachings. We can also affirm, promote, and support CCHD sponsored programs in partnership through our campus ministries and NCSC.

Be it resolved that:

- We condemn hostility, complacency, and ignorance about the plight of migrants and encourage a spirit of dialogue, inclusiveness, education, and advocacy.
- We call upon the U.S. government to foster a culture of non-discrimination and compassion towards migrant farmworkers and other immigrants who come to the U.S. seeking better economic living conditions.
- We call upon Catholic students to educate themselves and others about the injustices that migrant farmworkers face and join in solidarity with them.
- We urge students to write to elected officials urging them to support bills and legislation that helps migrant farmworkers navigate not only the U.S. immigration system but also learn about basic rights that they have and how they can protect themselves from companies that may be exploiting them.
- We commend the U.S.C.C.B. and Catholic-inspired NGOs, as well as laity-driven associations for their prayerful efforts to educate for justice, their courage to speak out in defense of farmworkers, and persistence to advocate for systemic change.
- We, the students of the NCSC and thus members of the International Movement of Catholic Students – Pax Romana, vow to work together to eliminate discrimination and exploitation of migrant farm workers in the United States and globally. We pledge to work for the social and economic justice that our faith has instilled in us through lobbying for the rights of the farmworker to get paid a decent living wage and seek to improve economic conditions in less developed countries.

Sponsored by the International Relations Committee of the National Catholic Student Coalition at the 25th Annual Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

[1] “A Decade after Economic Justice for All: Continuing Principles, Changing Context, New Challenges.” National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1995.

[2] “The BOCES Genesco Migrant Center.”

[3] Christopher D. Malano. “A Voice for the Voiceless,” *The Catholic Collegian*. Volume 23, Issue 3.