

Catholic Church in California Launches Initiative to Welcome Immigrants into the Fullness of American Citizenship

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*Heeding the call of Pope Francis during the Holy Year of Mercy, the Catholic Church in California has begun an effort to naturalize the hundreds of thousands of Legal Permanent Residents who are not fully realizing the promise of citizenship. **Garden Grove, Calif., (Feb. 23, 2016)** –* The Most Rev. José H. Gómez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, will join the Most Rev. Dominic Luong, Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Orange, other Bishops and clergy, and parish leaders from across California at Christ Cathedral on February 27, 12 p.m. – 2:30 p.m., for the launch of a comprehensive state-wide initiative that will bring together the California Catholic Conference of Bishops, diocesan administrations across the state, Catholic Charities, and local parishes in a coordinated effort to naturalize the estimated 2.4 million Legal Permanent Residents eligible for naturalization in California ([Department of Homeland Security, 2013](#)). This effort represents a new program that will offer practical assistance for legal residents seeking full citizenship. This effort will work in parallel with the Church's ongoing efforts toward comprehensive immigration reform. "As part of the Holy Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has called on the faithful to offer the profound mercy of Christ to the marginalized. The Church is uniquely positioned through our established immigration and naturalization programs to help millions of immigrants benefit from the fullness of citizenship and truly join our society. Through this first-of-its-kind initiative our many disparate programs and resources will be brought together to assist permanent residents in gaining citizenship," said the Most Rev. Kevin Vann, Bishop of Orange and Chair of the Board of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network. Archbishop Gomez, Bishop Luong, Ned Dolejsi, Executive Director of the California Catholic Conference, and other leaders will participate in the afternoon presentations at the Christ Cathedral. Presenters will offer insights on the challenge faced and introduce an action and training plan for Catholic parishes across the state. Upon the conclusion of the meeting Archbishop Gomez, Bishop Luong and the other Bishops and clergy in attendance will lead a procession through an exhibit displayed on the campus, called *A Journey of Hope Along the Migrant Trail: "A Via Crucis Migrante"* (Migrant Stations of the Cross). This exhibit was created with sacred artifacts found along the U.S.-Mexico border and offers a powerful, prayerful encounter that brings to light the plight of migrants, refugees and all those who inhabit the margins of our society. In honor of the Year of Mercy and Pope Francis' faithful leadership on this issue, the procession will be led by the cross held by the Holy Father during his recent trip to Mexico.

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