

Immigration Role Play

Target Audience: Grades 10-12; Young Adult groups, Adults

Time Need: Approximately 40 min. to 1 hour.

Curriculum Links:

- CST: Rights and Duties, Human Dignity
- Human Rights

Lesson Contents:

1. Objective of activity
2. Preparation needed before session
3. Process for introducing concept, process and role-play
4. Print-ready Role playing Cards.

“For I was a stranger and you welcomed me,” Mt 25

Overview of Lesson

Objective: This role play activity engages participants in an active way, offering them an opportunity to explore immigration and the lives of immigrants from different perspectives. It is designed to foster reflection and dialogue on the complexities of the current U.S. immigration issues.

Preparation:

1. Before the session, read the U.S. Catholic Bishop’s statement on immigration, *Strangers no Longer*. Click on the link below for a concise summary as well as the complete text. You may also wish to assign participants the text to read as well before beginning this activity. See: http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org/bishops_call.html
2. Consider using the Education for Justice PowerPoint presentation: *Welcoming the Stranger* which provides a visual overview of the Church’s view on immigration. Presentation can be used in its entirety - or condensed for a shorter viewing. The presentation is approximately 35 slides in length.
Link: <http://www.educationforjustice.org/index.fpl/1200/rs/1/article/10712.html>
3. You may also wish to refer to the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops’ (USCCB) web site, **Justice for Immigrants** for extensive background information and a wide variety of resources, including legislative updates. On the website you can click on “Learn the Issues” which will lead you to very helpful fact sheets, backgrounders and statements from Catholic bishops on the current immigration debate.
See: <http://justiceforimmigrants.org/>
4. Print out the Role cards included here. Photo copy the role cards back to back so that the role title appears on the front side, and the corresponding role description appears on the back side.(see pages 4 and 5) Photocopy enough role cards for the participants. *Cut out before distributing.*

Immigration Role Play Process:

1. Divide participants into groups of 6.
2. Set up the experience by explaining the following to the participants: (Allow 5 minutes for set-up)
 “This activity will offer you an opportunity to explore immigration and the lives of immigrants from different perspectives. This experience is designed to foster reflection and dialogue on the complexities of the current U.S. immigration issues. In your small groups, you will be engaging in a series of three conversations each conversation has two people playing their roles, while the others in the group listen. I will instruct you to begin when I read the first conversation task. At this time, please take a moment to read over your role.” (Pass out roles on slips of paper.)
3. There will be three conversations (they are listed below)— each conversation has two people playing their roles, while the others in the group listen. Allow 5 minutes for each conversation, (estimated total time allotted for role-play conversations is 15-20 minutes.)
4. Distribute the role cards to each group making sure each member of the group has a different role.
5. Each person in their small group selects one of the following roles: (more information on these roles below)
 1. A Central American person who can’t find a way to meet his/her family’s needs.
 2. A Central American who has had some experience in the U.S.
 3. A member of the U.S. National Guard assigned to help patrol the U.S.-Mexican border
 4. A U.S. social service worker on the border
 5. A state legislator from an area with a significant immigrant population
 6. A U.S. Congressional representative from an area with a significant immigrant population
6. When you have called time, ask participants to process and discuss what their observations and insights were from the “conversations” in their small group (Allow 5-10 minutes).
7. As a large group take time to de-brief. Share small group insights with the larger group. (Allow 10-15 minutes)

Conversations & Roles:

Conversation 1: Two Central Americans discuss the risks and benefits of going to the U.S. to work.

Role 1: A person (in a Central American country) who is planning to go to the U.S. to find work.

Your family has always made a living by farming. But now family farms are no longer profitable and you cannot find work that pays enough money to meet your family’s basic needs (food, shelter, clothes, health care, education). Your parents are aging, and you have 3 children. You have friends with relatives in the U.S., and you’ve heard about opportunities to work in the U.S. where you could earn more money in a month than you could earn in your country in a year. You have contacts that can help you make the trip. You are thinking of maybe taking your oldest son with you.

Role 2: A Central American who has just returned from the U.S.

You went to the U.S. two years ago, planning to work on a farm during the harvest season and then return to your family. Security tightened at the U.S. border. You stayed in the U.S. and found a job at a poultry processing plant. Recently, you have heard stories about U.S. crackdowns and detentions of undocumented immigrants. But you also saw the rallies for immigrant rights in the U.S. You missed your family and decided to return to your country, hoping that you will have another chance in the near future to return temporarily to the U.S. to work.

Conversation 2: A member of the National Guard and a social service worker discuss the issue of people crossing the U.S.-Mexican border.

Role 3. A member of the National Guard.

You are from a Mid-Western state, but have recently been assigned to help patrol the U.S.-Mexican border. Your parents were immigrants, and you are not anti-immigrant, but you think people should come to the U.S. via legal means. You have been a little surprised at what you have seen on the border. You know you have a job to do, but sometimes you feel bad when you see people dying during their attempts to get into the U.S.

Role 4. A social service worker

You work with a religious group who has a hospitality house near the U.S.-Mexican border. You give people food, water, clothing, basic first aid, and a place to rest. You do not ask if they are “legal.” People find out about your group via word-of-mouth. You try to maintain good relations with the border patrol and local authorities.

Conversation 3: Two elected officials discuss immigration policy.

Role 5: A local elected official in a state with a significant immigrant population

You are getting calls from people in your community, complaining about the groups of “foreign” men congregating in the parking lot of the local shopping center. Yet a friend of yours who has a construction business says that he likes to hire these men for temporary construction jobs. A recent law prohibits issuing driver’s licenses to anyone without documentation of legal residency. You are not sure if this is a good idea. Now there is talk about hospitals requiring documentation before they will treat people, and you are not sure what the consequences of this may be. You hope to get some help from the federal government on these issues.

Role 6: A member of the U.S. Congress

Last year you voted for a bill that requires a fence to be built along the U.S.-Mexico border. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time, to pacify many of your anti-immigrant constituents before the election. You saw your vote as mostly symbolic, since no one really expects the fence to be built. You hear from some business groups who say they need the immigrant labor supply. You know that there are many ‘mixed’ families, with children who were born here to parents who are undocumented. You occasionally hear from some Catholic groups who say that our nation has a responsibility to people who come here looking for a way to provide their families with the basic necessities of life. But you believe that the law is important, and you do not favor amnesty for people who broke the law. You are trying to gauge public opinion in your district on the immigration issue. You are looking for advice from local officials.

Role1:

A Central American person who can't find a way to meet his/her family's needs.

Role 4:

A social service worker

Role 2:

A Central American who has just returned from the U.S.

Role 5:

A local elected official in a state with a significant immigrant population

Role 3:

A member of the National Guard.

Role 6:

A member of the U.S. Congress

IMMIGRATION

<p>4. You work with a religious group who has a hospitality house near the U.S.-Mexican border. You give people food, water, clothing, basic first aid, and a place to rest. You do not ask if they are "legal." People find out about your group via word-of-mouth. You try to maintain good relations with the border patrol and local authorities.</p>	<p>1. Your family has always made a living by farming. But now family farms are no longer profitable and you cannot find work that pays enough money to meet your family's basic needs (food, shelter, clothes, health care, education). Your parents are aging, and you have 3 children. You have friends with relatives in the U.S., and you've heard about opportunities to work in the U.S. where you could earn more money in a month than you could earn in your country in a year. You have contacts that can help you make the trip. You are thinking of maybe taking your oldest son with you.</p>
<p>5. You are getting calls from people in your community, complaining about the groups of "foreign" men congregating in the parking lot of the local shopping center. Yet a friend of yours who has a construction business says that he likes to hire these men for temporary construction jobs. A recent law prohibits issuing driver's licenses to anyone without documentation of legal residency. You are not sure if this is a good idea. Now there is talk about hospitals requiring documentation before they will treat people, and you are not sure what the consequences of this may be. You hope to get some help from the federal government on these issues.</p>	<p>2. You went to the U.S. two years ago, planning to work on a farm during the harvest season and then return to your family. Security tightened at the U.S. border. You stayed in the U.S. and found a job at a poultry processing plant. Recently, you have heard stories about U.S. crackdowns and detentions of undocumented immigrants. But you also saw the rallies for immigrant rights in the U.S. You missed your family and decided to return to your country, hoping that you will have another chance in the near future to return temporarily to the U.S. to work.</p>
<p>6. Last year you voted for a bill that requires a fence to be built along the U.S.-Mexico border. It seemed like the right thing to do at the time, to pacify many of your anti-immigrant constituents before the election. You saw your vote as mostly symbolic, since no one really expects the fence to be built. You hear from some business groups who say they need the immigrant labor supply. You know that there are many 'mixed' families, with children who were born here to parents who are undocumented. You occasionally hear from some Catholic groups who say that our nation has a responsibility to people who come here looking for a way to provide their families with the basic necessities of life. But you believe that the law is important, and you do not favor amnesty for people who broke the law. You are trying to gauge public opinion in your district on the immigration issue. You are looking for advice from local officials.</p>	<p>3. You are from a Mid-Western state, but have recently been assigned to help patrol the U.S.-Mexican border. Your parents were immigrants, and you are not anti-immigrant, but you think people should come to the U.S. via legal means. You have been a little surprised at what you have seen on the border. You know you have a job to do, but sometimes you feel bad when you see people dying during their attempts to get into the U.S.</p>