

# Immigration Talks Beg for Reason

The perceived deficiencies of the current immigration system are already a leading topic in this year's elections. Even without all the political blather, what we know is that immigration is multi-faceted, with moral, legal, and public policy overtones complicated by economic components and contradictions.

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## Charitably Speaking



by Patrick Winn

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Drawing on faith-based sources and objective studies (and remembering comedian Steve Wright's observation that 76.2 percent of all statistics are made up on the spot), we see the following that are objectively accurate but framed within

various agendas. All have been used as arguments in the great immigration debate of 2018 and should cause head-scratching confusion:

■ From October 1999 through September 2000, 1.6 million Mexicans were stopped by the U.S. Border Patrol. From October 2016 through September 2017, that number was at the lowest level since 1972, namely, 128,000, with another 176,000 from other Latin American countries.

■ As the number of Mexican immigrants decreased, Honduran and Salvadoran migrants increased, mainly by people with higher education and income levels. These advantaged migrants posed greater threats to oppressive ruling elites and drug lords vying to control their countries by intimidation and violence. They were targets and victims trying to save their families' lives.

■ Latin American migrants are convicted of crimes at rates lower than native-born Americans.

■ Of immigrant men between the ages of 18 and 39, 1.6 percent are incarcerated; 3.3 percent of native-born American men in that age range are in jail.

■ For men in that same age range without a high-school diploma, the incarceration rate for Mexican immigrants is less than one-third that of native-born American males.

■ Immigrants are more likely to be Bible-believing Christians than murderers or rapists.

■ From 2007 to 2017, American Evangelical congregations saw minority membership in the U.S. grow from 19 percent to 25 percent of Christian believers, driven in large part by immigrants and their children.

■ "We're all immigrants." The Fourteenth Amendment confers citizenship on anyone born in this country. Thus, no one need ever be more than one generation from citizenship status.

Statistics are useful in sensitive discussions about immigration as we repeatedly hear the moral and political certainties of competing pundits. But history shows that neither the 19th century's Know Nothings' closed immigration door, nor the current Know-It-All didactic pundits on all sides of the debate, have articulated a sound immigration reform proposition.

The Catholic bishops have reaffirmed the right of migrants to travel across borders for personal safety and economic security. They have also recognized the right of countries to secure and protect their borders. Those principles do not have to conflict. Resolving them will undoubtedly prove difficult, and certainly will require us to tone down the volume on the rhetoric.

Debating civilly, even heatedly, using accurate historical narratives are hallmarks of American principles of justice.

Negative racial and ethnic epithets, unfair housing practices and education discrimination aren't anything but irrational ingredients of bigotry. They should not undermine what the Constitution guarantees, and the Church teaches about dignity in the context of human rights and immigration.

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'Learning from history is impossible if the narrative is wrong.'

—Mary Anastasia  
O'Grady

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Read "Charitably Speaking" in *The Observer* on the last week of every month.