

## Welcoming Migrants: A Civic and Faith Response

With an unprecedented number of migrants expected to arrive in Chicago this week, Sr. Bernadine Karge, OP, and members of Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants combined with Dominican University to present a workshop on how to faithfully respond.



Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, including: (L-R): Kathy Myers, OSB Oblate; Sr. Cathy Fedewa, CSFN; Sr. Benita Coffey, OSB; Br. Michael Gosch, CSV; Sr. Jean Keeley, OP; Sr. Bernadine Karge, OP

The presentation took place Sept. 23 at Dominican University, which is sponsored by the Sinsinawa Dominicans and located in River Forest, IL. Sr. Bernadine Karge, OP, opened the morning event, which featured prominent civic and faith leaders actively involved in welcoming migrants to the city.

Beatriz Ponce de León, Deputy Mayor of Immigrant, Migrant and Refugee Rights for the City of Chicago, opened the presentation with a civic response. Ms. Ponce de Leon was appointed in July, and she is the first to hold the position. At the workshop she described the growing number of migrants who are living on the floors of police stations and Chicago's airports awaiting placement in shelters, yet city officials are committed to making Chicago a Welcoming City.

"Our goal is to welcome new arrivals with dignity, help meet their basic needs and connect them to resources that put them on a path to self-sufficiency and resettlement," Ms. Ponce de Leon said.

She also identified the city's strategic priorities:

- Replace police stations with prefabricated structures
- Improve safety and shelter operations

- Apply cost-saving strategies
- Accelerate resettlement
- Manage the number of new arrivals

Ms. Ponce de León said Chicago serves as a model for other cities in large part because of its many partnerships, including dozens of community-based organizations, mutual aid organizations, faith communities and individual volunteers provide resources and support to new arrivals every day.



Sr. Rose Therese Nolta with Sr. Stella Akello

In response, Br. Michael Gosch, CSV, a member of Sisters and Brothers of Immigrants, moderated a panel of representatives of faith communities working across the city and suburbs to welcome migrants. The included: Sr. Stella Akello of Stella House of Hospitality, Rev. Sandra Castillo of the Episcopal Diocese Sanctuary Working Group of Chicago, Ms. Marilu Gonzalez with Catholic Charities' Family Sponsorship Program and Ms. Emily Wheeler with Faith Community Initiative.

"Chicago's response demonstrates the soul of Chicago and our commitment to be a Welcoming City," Ms. Ponce de León added. "We are seeing unprecedented levels of collaboration among government and other sectors."