The President of the United States addressed the General Assembly for the first time this week; our fiscal year ends in ten days; the US judicial system, including the United States Supreme Court, has a full docket, including many cases about immigrants and refugees; DACA youth are on the clock—their status must be made regular by March 5, 2017, or they can be deported. And as Catholic Christians, we are one month into “Share the Journey” campaign, initiated by Caritas Internationalis and endorsed by the USCCB, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services. Share the journey is a universal Catholic campaign to raise consciousness for the plight of immigrants and refugees worldwide (see the Website for more information, including liturgical resources).

Amidst these news instances, today’s scriptures remind us, “You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourself in the land of Egypt,” (Exodus 22:20) and “‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.’”(Matthew 22: 37-40).

Pope Francis’ “Message for the 2018 World Day of Migrants and Refugees” provides grist for this weekend’s homilists. He writes in part, “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age (Matthew 25:35-43).” Pope Francis continues, building upon four powerful verbs: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate.

**Welcome:** Will Congress cut the slots for immigrants and refugees 50 percent, as the Administration has requested for FY 2018?

**Protect:** Will the United States address the rights of immigrants for a timely and fair immigration trial, those often detained indefinitely in detention centers, awaiting appearance before an immigration judge?

**Promote:** Will the United States Congress finally advance the DREAM Act, a bill which has been introduced in every Congress since 2001, and allow young adult immigrants to advance their educational and economic opportunities while moving out from behind the shadows?

**Integrate:** Can our parishes become more welcoming communities to those who are new to our communities? It is one thing to “let” an immigrant community hold services in your church outside the schedule of the majority class; can we invite immigrants and refugees...
into our lives by sharing liturgical, educational, social, and service opportunities with us 12 months a year?

Finally, I posit that to “love your neighbor as yourself” flies in the face of the nativism and the “America first” movement that is proclaimed so emphatically at Charlottesville type demonstrations and by some public officials pandering to an angry voter base.

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