

Summer Edition 2025

## Vayan y Den Fruto II "Go and Bear Fruit" At Loyola University Chicago

*"We are witnesses to their resilience amid hatred and criminalization. They, like the servant in the Bible, carry the Good News in their lives... that invite us to be a sensitive Church that walks prophetically with them."\**

The *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference brought together thirty-five men and women from around the U.S. and Mexico who shared their stories of faith and commitment to farmworkers.

Thanks to the Institute of Pastoral Studies of Loyola University of Chicago and a Lilly Endowment grant, our Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network (CMFN) mission among the migrant farmworkers in the US is Walking Forward into our 40th year.

Inspired by the same spirit of kinship and community that brought together the companions of Jesus at the first Pentecost, we remembered that the Church was born from a small group of friends who walked together to build a more just world.

In this edition of *CMFN Today* are nine testimonies from attendees of the conference. Listening attentively to our testimonies ignites fires within us and awakens the call to justice and dignity among our neighbors, the men, women and families working in agriculture, dairies, and processing plants. These testimonies give voice to the good news of the CMFN mission.



We are happy to present this CMFN bulletin in the spirit of Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. After thirty-nine years of commitment, the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network is marching forward. Together, we're reading the signs of the times, encountering Christ among our brother and sister agricultural workers, and learning to bring our prophetic voice to the national narrative.

**You're invited to join us in the CMFN call to action** that develops a communication network for the human and spiritual wellbeing of migrant farmworkers, to raise consciousness of the community at large to their presence, and develop and support pastoral leadership.

\*This quote references the oral statement of the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network *VyDF II* June conference.



There were an estimated 2.4 million open agricultural jobs in the United States in 2024 with 56% of farmers reporting labor shortages. Decreased supply of labor, among other factors, caused labor costs to surge 17% in 2023; these costs are expected to rise another approximately 7% in 2024.

US Department of Labor  
June 25, 2025

**Anisable Palma**  
New Ulm, MN

What did I carry away from my week at *Vayan y Den Fruto II*? Until now, in my diocese I have focused on forming leaders who strengthen parish life. But the Spirit made me see that it's time to get out, to go out to those who work in packing plants, ranches, and dairies, those who cannot come to church because they must work. And those workers? Who accompany them if not us?

Knowing that need to provide accompaniment hurts me. Those workers await a visit, a presence, a light. Mission is not activism; it is faithfulness to Christ's command: "Go and bear fruit." **The conference gave me direction, hope, and a new impetus.** Today, with that renewed desire, I trust that the Spirit will continue to guide my steps to bear fruit that will last.



## Vayan y Den Fruto II Testimonies

**Carmen Valenzuela**  
Milwaukee, WI

What inspired me from the conference?

Witnessing the struggle of all these leaders who face difficult situations every day, such as exploitation, discrimination, lack of labor rights, and family separation.

**I am inspired by the call to action I heard at *Vayan y Den Fruto II* to defend those rights of my fellow human beings.**

What am I inspired to do?

- Educate by letting these workers know that they are not alone and that they have rights
- Support organizations that fight for migrants
- Document or disseminate their testimonies, so that they are heard
- Value this work migrants contribute, and support their dignity and humanity

**Joshua Klickman**  
Raleigh, NC

*Vayan y Den Fruto II* reminded me that fellowship is the most essential element of ministry.

**Networking and sharing are what builds a genuine community.** A single face-to-face encounter will inspire us more than any number of letters, Zoom calls, or phone calls. Those communications can supplement our in-person fellowship, but the New Testament writers tell us, as in John 3, 1:13-14, "I have many things to write to you, but I would prefer not to do so with pen and ink. Instead, I hope to see you soon and speak with you face-to-face."

I returned home inspired to continue to grow my network and meet with fellow *Vayan y Den Fruto II* attendees in neighboring states. And importantly, to increase my in-person visits to the ministers who go into the workplaces and fields.



### Effects Of Immigrant Workers on Federal Budget and the Economy

A recent surge in immigration is projected to boost the economy and reduce federal deficits. Specifically, immigrants are estimated to contribute \$1.2 trillion in federal revenue over the 2024-2034 period.

Congressional Budget Office  
July 23, 2024



**Fr. Jesus Flores**  
**Rochester, NY**

For almost a week, a group of men and women who support migrant workers across the nation met in Chicago at *Vayan y Den Fruto II*. We shared our stories, hopes, and plans during that week, but we left amazed to hear how migrant workers change the regions where they live: their impact on their local economies, the sowing of relationships of friendship and solidarity, and their celebration of the joy of life.

We shared our concerns that the government is spreading a narrative of hatred and criminalization against the migrant population. But, amid this, we have witnessed the migrants' resilience. They are like the Servant in the Bible. That is why we believe that these people of God carry the Good News in their lives.

Their lives invite us to be a sensitive Church that walks prophetically with them: in resistance and opposition to discriminatory discourse. Every action of ours, no matter how small, must be prophetic.

**We left inspired to create alliances and networks with ranchers' civil organizations, political leaders, religious organizations, and with consulates.** We returned to our homes inspired to make our voices heard and show the dignified life and creative work of migrant people visible. We are committed to continuing to meet and encourage each other. Our meeting has opened our eyes.

**Manuel Cuya**  
**Newark, NJ**

From the moment of my arrival to the second *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference, I felt Jesus was speaking, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," (Matthew 9:37). It was clear from the actions and words of my brothers and sisters also attending that they also heard that voice.

I now better understand what harvest He speaks of in the book of Matthew. That harvest occurring now in a time of complex social reality that includes too much police harassment, ICE raids, displacements, family separation, and deportations.

***Vayan y Den Fruto II* gave me the opportunity to meet like-minded people from the Catholic social service agencies and long-time workers in CMFN.** I left for home inspired to share my own experiences as well as those experiences I heard in those Chicago sessions by Lake Michigan.

The perseverance, creativity, and hope of the represented communities have brought light and hope into my Christian life.



Undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are disproportionately concentrated in certain industries. Construction employs around 13-14% of undocumented workers. In agriculture, about 12% of workers are undocumented. The hospitality industry employs roughly 7.1% undocumented workers.

Statista, Nov. 18, 2024





**Mónica López**  
**Huayacocotla, México**

I found inspiration at the *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference against a backdrop of the detention of migrants in Chicago on their way to their regular appointments with ICE to advance their efforts to achieve legal status in the US.

While that detention was taking place at one end of Chicago, CMFN was hosting our meeting at the other end of Chicago in the beautiful setting along Lake Michigan. **We were meeting at a key moment in US history** as Americans – like most of the Western world – were finally, painfully moving to resolving how it will deal with the movement of people across borders in a world growing smaller and more divided between haves and have nots.

This conference took place in the days before **the feast of Pentecost, a time that invites us to remember that the Church was born from a small group of friends who decided to walk together to build a more just world.** Today, it's urgent to remember what inspired those friends in that time and use that same inspiration to commit ourselves to the struggle for migrant dignity.



Region	Year 2023	Percent
Mexico	11,000,000	61%
Central America	2,100,000	12%
Caribbean	725,000	4%
South America	1,000,000	6%
Asia	1,700,000	9%
Europe & Canada	775,000	4%
Middle East	180,000	1%
Africa	375,000	2%
Oceania	80,000	> 1%
Total	17,935,000	

Pew Research Center 07/22/2024

**Miguel Moreno**  
**Davenport, IA**

I recently had the profound opportunity to participate in the *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference held at Chicago Loyola University. I felt inspired to be one part of a common, moving testimony to the commitment of the Church to migrant communities.

The temporary community we built along Lake Michigan's shores was diverse, coming from different realities, each with its own challenges and goals. But in our time together, we shared a spirit of brotherhood and faith. We learned from each other as we shared personal stories, successes and failures.

In a world often marked by indifference, the Catholic Pastoral Campesina emerges as a beacon that lights the way to a more just and equitable future. I was reminded of workers who are close to the land and listened to their voices, and now accompany them in their struggles.

**This *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference inspired me to remember that faith, when lived in community and translated into service, has the power to change realities and build a more humane world.**





**Nohemi Barajas**  
**Kalamazoo, MI**

What inspired me about this *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference:

- The courage of the speakers
- The organizers' warm welcome
- The spirit of equality shown by all of the attendees which fostered a warm brotherhood throughout our time together
- Meeting again with my teacher Fr. Tom Florek and my *animador*, Sergio Pagés
- To feel the love of Jesus reflected among all the members of the conference

How will I apply what I learned what I learned at *Vayan y Den Fruto II* to my own migrant ministry?

**I am inspired to keep from becoming discouraged by a lack of understanding from those who don't know lives of migrants and the value they bring to the whole world.**



**Teresita Kontos**  
**Yuma, AZ**

The *Vayan y Den Fruto II* conference was an enriching experience that reaffirmed the importance of faith, social justice, and community commitment. I was inspired by the presentations from representatives of dioceses who shared their testimonies. They showed their dedication to improving the living conditions of our migrant brothers. **Migrant stories demonstrated faith translated as action.** Their spirituality is more than prayer. It is their daily struggle for dignity and the rights of those without a voice.



That call to action inspires me to strengthen commitment to the Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network. I want to continue to foster collaborative networks among dioceses that respond to the real needs of farmworkers and strengthen their presence within the Church.

**Social justice and the Gospel go hand in hand,** and their testimonies remind us all that faith is not just a belief, but a commitment that translates into concrete actions.



The Pope said, "The Holy Spirit also opens borders between peoples uniting people's hearts making us view others as our brothers and sisters. This is how differences no longer become an occasion for division and conflict, but rather a shared patrimony from which we can all draw."

Pope Leo XIV, June 8, 2025

## Vayan y Den Fruto II Agenda

### Preparing CMFN For the Road Ahead – 2025-2026

June 1st through June 6th was a busy week for those attending *Vayan y Den Fruto II* at Loyola University Chicago. Learning, striving, and simply being in a room with others sharing the same hopes, challenges, and frustrations was – according to testimonies – enriching and profound.

It was also a time for fellowship and forging new bonds of friendship and common cause. Along with the work, we had fun. It was a rich time for us all.



### Vayan y Den Fruto II Schedule

#### Monday, June 2:

- Seeing our reality
- What we're learning
- Evening social

#### Tuesday, June 3:

- Two 2025 projects
- The CMFN mission
- Social, Giordano's

#### Wednesday, June 4:

- Shared ministry practices
- Social, Chicago River architectural tour

#### Thursday, June 5:

- Regional and national planning for mission ahead

#### Friday, June 6:

- Sharing the graces of the week
- Missioning liturgy



"In the context of a gravely deficient immigration system, **the mass arrest and removal of our neighbors, friends and family members on the basis of immigration status alone**, particularly in ways that are arbitrary or without due process, represent a profound social crisis before which no person of good will can remain silent," said Archbishop Timothy Broglio, President of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops.

OSV News, 07/02/2025



## Attendees of Vayan y Den Fruto II, Chicago Loyola University

- |                                 |                    |                                |                  |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Teresita de Jesús Kontos        | Tucson/Yuma, AZ    | Alfredo Zepeda                 | Veracruz, México |
| Manuel Fragoso Carranza         | Tucson/Yuma, AZ    | Monica López Cuetara           | Veracruz, México |
| Xochitl Yadira Talamantes Ramos | Tucson/Yuma, AZ    | Anisabel Palma                 | New Ulm, MN      |
| Rocendo Herrera Rodriguez       | San Bernardino, CA | Antonio Medina                 | New Ulm, MN      |
| Francisco Sánchez               | San Bernardino, CA | Mike McAndrew                  | Kansas City, MO  |
| Miguel Martín Moreno-Iberico    | Davenport, IA      | Ramon Calzada                  | Omaha, NE        |
| Sergio Pages                    | Detroit, MI        | Manuel Cuya Yaya               | Newark, NJ       |
| Antonia Salinas                 | Kalamazoo, MI      | Jesus Flores                   | Rochester, NY    |
| Leidy Johanna Zuñiga Balanta    | Kalamazoo, MI      | Lucila Romero Ponce            | Rochester, NY    |
| Nohemí Barajas                  | Kalamazoo, MI      | Michael Sauter                 | Rochester, NY    |
| Jorge Barajas                   | Kalamazoo, MI      | Joshua Klickman                | Raleigh, NC      |
| Graciela López                  | Kalamazoo, MI      | Sarah Klickman                 | Raleigh, NC      |
| Narciso López                   | Kalamazoo, MI      | Marco Tavares                  | Raleigh, NC      |
|                                 |                    | Dick Notter                    | Toledo, OH       |
|                                 |                    | Mike Imperial                  | Richmond, VA     |
|                                 |                    | Angélica Zuñiga                | Richmond, VA     |
|                                 |                    | Raúl De León                   | Richmond, VA     |
|                                 |                    | Carmen Valenzuela              | Milwaukee, WI    |
|                                 |                    | Iracen Servin                  | Milwaukee, WI    |
|                                 |                    | Lilia Graciela Paredes Guevara | Milwaukee, WI    |
|                                 |                    | Mónica Semper                  | Milwaukee, WI    |



### 2025 Top 5 Nations Estimated Undocumented

As a combination of conflict, wealth disparity between have and have-not countries, and internal threats have grown, undocumented immigration has increased world-wide. This is an estimate of the percentage of undocumented of national population total. As the percentage has gone up, shifts in political, social, and cultural expectations have placed more stress on each country. This is not just a US issue.

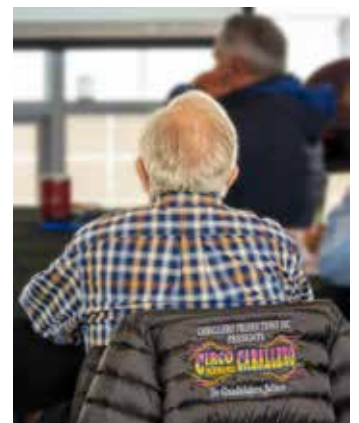
Country	Estimated Undocumented	Percentage Of Population
Russia	11,000,000	7.64%
United States	10,700,000	3.08%
Malaysia	800,000	2.23%
France	1,045,000	1.57%
South Africa	750,000	1.16%



### Humans all here. Here for all humans.

Smiling. Listening. Contemplating. Singing. Being led from what is in them and what is outside of themselves.

Happy in their work, certainly, but even so, understanding that this work follows the directions of their Lord.



**Who Will Pay For Florida Tomatoes When A One-Two Punch Hits Pricing?**

An estimate of the number of undocumented migrants working in Florida tomato fields is between 37% and 47%. The Farmworker Association of Florida places the number at 300,000. The reliance on migrant labor is a key factor in Florida's tomato farming.

"You can't even afford to pick tomato," said Heather Moehling, president of the Miami-Dade County Farm Bureau. "Between the cost of the labor and the inputs that goes in, it's more cost-effective for the farmers to just plow them right now."

Tony DiMare told WSVN 7 Miami, "We have to secure our borders south and north, but you have to have a workforce in this country."

Combined with a 25% tariff on Mexican tomatoes, consumers who want tomatoes will only have access to a higher grocery bill.

Moneywise, 06/05/2025



## Presenters and Facilitators *Vayan y Den Fruto II*



Jeff Stewart, director of the Immigrant Worker Project, an Ohio based organization, works towards the goals of sustainable worker communities and economic equality. IWP empowers community leaders, creates structures for global education, and advocates for workplace justice.



Mariana Miller is the Assistant Dean for Continuing Education at the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University Chicago. A native of Argentina, she has lived in the US since 1999 and is a graduate of Boston College with an MA in Theology. Mariana lives in Omaha, NE with her husband and three children.



For the past five years, Fr. Pablo Moros SJ has been in Manaus, Brazil serving as the director of the Amazonian Network for Intercultural Bilingual Education (REIBA). Pablo, a native of Peru, currently is living in Chicago preparing for a new mission in pastoral care in the Philippines and is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with CMFN.



Fr. Tom Florek SJ is the Executive Director of the Catholic Migrant Farmworkers Network. A native of Wisconsin, Tom taught Mexican and Puerto Rican children in Milwaukee in the 70s and after becoming a Fulbright Scholar, he studied and worked in Mexico. His efforts since have focused on ministering to migrants and those who serve them.



Ramón Luis Calzada, the former Executive Director of the Centro Latino of Iowa, serves as Senior Vice-President for FetchKids.com, a school dismissal and after-school pickup app. Ramón also supports CMFN as leadership trainer and organizational management consultant.



Michal Hall Bravo Ramirez is an administrative assistant at the Institute of Pastoral Studies of Loyola University Chicago for projects related to the Lilly Grant. For the past decade, she has worked as both a Visual Arts and Spanish language teacher in both Mexico and the US and currently lives in Los Angeles with her husband.



Maria Celina Márquez is a policy advisor at the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. She earned her Juris Doctorate from the George Washington University Law School and has clerked for Legal Aid in Edinburg, Texas and for immigration law firms in Washington DC and Virginia. Her advocacy work focuses on immigration matters.



Sergio Pagés is a native of Venezuela living in Bingham Farms, MI with his wife and two children. He has been teaching Ignatian Discernment workshops as well as other Ignatian Spirituality Themes since 2013. In addition to working full time at an engineering company, he has been involved in several community and church affiliated organizations.



Gabriel Lara was born and raised in Guanajuato, Mexico, and has lived in Chicago for 25 years. For over 15 years, he had mobilized his community members impacted by injustice. Gabriel was instrumental in founding the Quinn Community Center in Maywood, IL, and is one of the founders of Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership (CSPL).



### Undocumented Immigrant Incarceration Rates Over Time, 2010-2023

Incarceration rates for native-born Americans, undocumented immigrants, and documented have changed between 2010-2023. In every year, the undocumented incarceration rate is between 31% and 56% below that of native-born Americans. And the documented incarceration rate is between 65% and 75% below that of native-born. The incarceration rate has declined for every group but from 2010 to 2023, the native-born incarceration rate fell by 23%, the documented incarceration rate fell by 38%, and the undocumented incarceration rate fell by 36%.

Cato Institute, April 24, 2025



Joanna Arellano-Gonzalez is a first generation Mexican-American born and raised in Chicago. She is the director of Spiritual and Theological Formation at Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership. In addition to being a co-founder and founding board member of CSPL, she was a founding board member and board president of The Co-Op Ed Center.

One of the goals of *Vayan y Den Fruto II* has been to strengthen the national community that exists within CMFN.

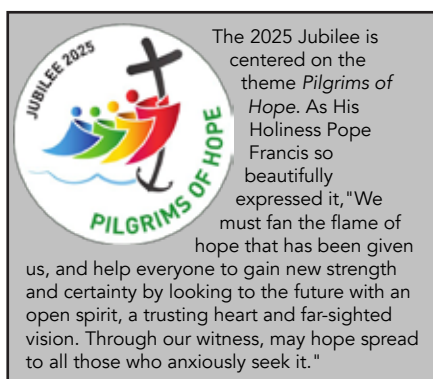
Everyone involved, attendees, presenters, and guests, shared, learned, prayed and laughed for the five days they spent together. But in addition to that shared work, the other piece of building a bond is spending time together in social settings and activities.

We worked hard during the days, but there was also social time in the days and evenings during shared meals and excursions to notable Chicago sites. Here are some photo glimpses into those activities.

When *Vayan y Den Fruto II* is a memory, those friendship bonds will still exist reaching across the country to support the work.



## Building A National Community Within CMFN



The 2025 Jubilee is centered on the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*. As His Holiness Pope Francis so beautifully expressed it, "We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it."



### **Undocumented Immigrants' Contribution To US Economy**

In 2022 US's 10.9 million undocumented paid \$96.7 billion in taxes

Undocumented paid an effective federal income tax rate of 5.27% in 2022

Undocumented make up 5% of US workforce, but are large role in key industries: 1 of 7 construction, 1 of 8 agriculture, and 1 of 14 medical

Deporting millions of undocumented would shrink the economy by \$1.1 to \$1.7 trillion.

In 2018 undocumented received \$2.6 billion in emergency Medicaid assistance, 0.4% of total Medicaid spending (\$629 billion)

Americans For Tax Fairness, March 12, 2025

