

Spring Edition 2026

CMFN: 40 YEARS OF COMMITMENT

EDITOR'S NOTE

The *Catholic Migrant Farmworkers Network* was founded in Washington, DC in 1986 as an offshoot of the *Third National Hispanic Enquentro*, "Prophetic Voices." At that meeting people like Fr. Dick Nutter saw the need to organize a national network of pastoral agents to minister among farmworkers.

In the subsequent 40 years, CMFN has evolved into a national mission that accompanies farmworkers – in all aspects of their daily lives – within what has become the broad spectrum of the agricultural industry.

In these days of so much pressure on all immigrants, this accompaniment is especially critical for migrant farmworkers. While so much of the world has changed in the last 40 years, CMFN's mission has remained true to its founding principles.

This issue of *El Sembrador* will introduce our new board officers and report on new sources of funding which have enabled the expansion of a pilot program, the El Sembrador formation program, in the dioceses of Raleigh, NC, and Monterey, CA.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



We are CMFN. Walking together for 40 years has benefited farmworkers, parishes, dioceses and CMFN board members and stakeholders. Through close support and formation accompaniment of fifty plus dioceses, national consultations, workshops, publications and more recently the *Vayan y Den Fruto* conferences, we have

grown. Our mission is to promote and proclaim a prophetic, missionary, pilgrim Church that encounters Christ in the migrant farmworker community. Through leadership formation, parish accompaniment, and national relationship building, Since January, 2025, our mission has taken on new urgency.

We are guided by the Synodal process of dialogue and discernment of the signs of the times in 2026, as we listen to the prophetic voice of the risen Christ in the cry of the migrant farmworkers for their human dignity, justice and inclusion.

"We are a community of migrant farm workers and rural immigrants, who walk towards the Kingdom without fear, giving witness as actors and not as spectators, a hardworking community in search of justice, mindful of the suffering."

Our CMFN response is to develop a national network of communication and pastoral initiatives by listening, analyzing, and collaborating

with diocesan farmworker ministries. We evangelize from the place of the human and spiritual lives of the farmworkers, by raising national awareness of the bounty delivered by migrant farmworkers, and the formation of pastoral leadership among the farmworker community

We are able to respond because of the CMFN members and friends who contribute time and treasures, and donate valuable professional services – database development, publishing, accounting and educational services – that sustain and grow our mission.

Fr Tom Florek, SJ

These photos are from the Fall, 2013 CMFN newsletter showing accompaniers and workers in the Charleston, SC diocese. Once again CMFN together with the USCCB/PCMRT will be visiting the Charleston Diocese this Summer.



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Articles Published By CMFN Members On Migrant and Immigration Issues

Two articles have been published recently that should be of particular interest to the CMFN community. Fr Mike McAndrew wrote *Challenges Regarding Immigration in the United States for Catholic Theological Ethics in the World Church* and Teresita Kontos wrote *Harvest of Hope – Faith and Inclusion for Farmworkers in the Catholic Church in the United States* as part of her Loyola University, Chicago master’s degree studies program.

Fr Mike McAndrew

Challenges Regarding Immigration in the United States

- The urgency involved with migration has grown
- A broken system of immigration has been militarized, flagrantly ignoring the human rights of migrants and refugees
- The U.S. Government response has been the defunding of international relief services and promoting the criminalization of immigrants by their anti-immigration policy with aggressive ICE enforcement
- Enforcing political action based upon fear, anger and prejudice
- The U.S. Church response:
- Pastoral Care for migrants
 - Seeing migrants as messengers of hope
 - A growing standing with our immigrant brothers and sisters
 - A renewed focus on the Catholic social teaching that requires historical, scriptural, scientific dialogue and reflection and a call to action to stand with migrants
 - Our response to the challenges posed by contemporary migration are summed up in four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate
 - When people recognize migrants as family, neighbor, coworker, friend and believer, it becomes possible to address the challenges of migration in society



Fr Mike McAndrew

Teresita Kontos

Harvest of Hope - Faith and Inclusion for Farmworkers in the Catholic Church in the United States

- How can the Church strengthen its pastoral care for the farmers and more fully recognize their role within the faith community?
- Who are migrant farmworkers?
- Communal spirituality, inspired by the mystery of the Trinity, gives them strength and a sense of belonging
- Their faith gives them strength and joy in the face of adversity
- Their stories reflect the pain of poverty and marginalization, they also reveal their faith their admirable resilience and their unwavering love for their families and for the land they cultivate
- Migrant labor was essential for agricultural growth, yet at the same time was denied rights and treated as powerless and insignificant.
- Pastoral practices...are proposed that recognize the dignity, central role and active participation of farmworkers in the life of the Church.
- The pastoral task among farmworkers
- The goal is to bring them out of the shadows
- Caring for dignifying agricultural work is a fundamental commitment to faith, justice and humanity.
- Pastoral ministry is grounded in the conviction that faith is not merely a spiritual dimension, but an intrinsically transformative force that mobilizes the Church toward encountering the most vulnerable.
- Authentic charity seeks to address the root causes of suffering by fostering a full social commitment
- Agricultural workers have much to teach us, and their suffering grants them a privileged place, for in their pain they know the suffering Christ. This elevates workers from mere recipients of aid to active participants in the mission of the Church.

Teresita Kontos teach



“Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by four words: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. For it is not a case of implementing welfare programmes from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together.”

[Fratelli Tutti 129] Pope Francis

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CMFN To Appear In June Issue of Jesuit's America Magazine

In March Helene Stapinski – a journalist on assignment from *America, The Jesuit Review* magazine – and photographer Lisa Bauso met with Fr Tom Florek in Berrien Springs, MI.

Ms Stapinski met with Fr Florek at a migrant camp in the Kalamazoo, MI dioceses where in addition to interviewing him for the article, joined a lunch in the field and later, a mass celebrated at San Felipe de Jesus, Fennville, MI.

The article is scheduled to appear in *America's* June issue and will be found at WWW.AMERICAMAGAZINE.ORG.

Forty years of CMFN mission's establishing pastoral initiatives on behalf of migrant farmworkers is significant. This article will draw the attention of American Church leadership as well as dioceses across the country. This is a timely and urgent message at a time when migrants in general are on the nation's conscience.



"... life of sharing, breaking of bread, and prayers... they shared their food with great joy and simplicity of heart.

Acts of the Apostles, 2:42-47



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New Officers Elected to CMFN Board of Directors Meet the New President and Vice President



Fr Jesus Flores
CMFN President

Father Flores is the Diocesan Director for Migrant Farmworker Ministry in Rochester, NY. He's been in service to migrants in upstate New York for 30 years.

“The journey shared in pastoral service with

migrants and their families teaches us that they are agents of transformation and witnesses of hope, despite a hostile political climate and environment. We believe in the creativity of the Spirit – capable of inspiring change and of creating conditions that foster the recognition of their legal status, their dignity, and the value of their lives.”



Maria Veronica Rodriguez
CMFN Vice-President

Maria Veronica Rodriguez is the Kalamazoo Diocesan Coordinator for Ministry to Neighbors. She's the contact person for those on the periphery including migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

“I hope that the migrant farmworkers and those who are ministering to migrant farmworkers feel that the CMFN is part of their life. I hope that we remain available so that the farmworkers know they are accompanied wherever they go. I hope they feel that we are family, and they can reach us when they need us.”

Monterey, CA Diocese Joins CMFN Sembrador Leadership Program

The Monterey, CA diocese is the fourth to welcome the CMFN Sembrador Leadership Formation program joining the dioceses of Raleigh, NC, Kalamazoo, MI, and Yuma, AZ

A serendipitous gathering of CMFN board members who also are diocesan directors of migrant farmworker ministries, met Bishop Ramon

Bejarano of the Monterey CA Diocese: Socorro Lagarda-Quiroz, Monterey, CA, Jose Lopez of Stockton CA, Anisabel Palma of New Ulm, MN, and CMFN director Fr Tom Florek. In the photo's background is the San Carlos School, next to the San Carlos Cathedral, one of the earliest California missions.



Brenda Lazaro-Ruiz, Socorro Lagarda-Quiroz, Jose Lopez, Bishop Ramon Bejarano, Fr Tom Florek SJ, and Anisabel Palma

