

**Bishop Seamus Hegarty Visits Pastoral Centers in USA
November 2009**

Most Reverend Seamus Hegarty, Bishop of Derry and Chair of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, visited the United States for a pastoral visit during October 30-November 7, 2009. Bishop Hegarty was accompanied by Mr. Brian Hanley, Emigrant Office of the IECE and Coordinator of the Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas.

Bishop Hegarty Visited the Irish Immigration Pastoral Center in Quincy, Massachusetts, the Irish Immigration Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Project Irish Outreach in New York City. During his visit he was able to talk with many of the undocumented Irish in these communities and hear their heart-wrenching stories. The Bishop was most concerned with their inability to leave the country to attend the funeral in Ireland of a loved one.

For many years the Irish Bishops have been concerned with the difficulties for the undocumented and have been advocating on their behalf through the efforts of the Irish Apostolate USA.

Bishop Hegarty, Mr. Hanley, and the IAUSA Board met with several members of Congress in Washington, DC to discuss the need for comprehensive immigration reform. The Irish delegation was pleased to learn that there is strong support for immigration reform in the U.S. Congress and that there is a window of opportunity in February/March 2010 to pass legislation.

Below are articles and photos that appeared in the press:

Geri Garvey,
Administrator, Irish Apostolate USA

Bishop of Derry fights for immigration reform on US visit

<http://www.irishemigrant.com/ie/go.asp?p=story&storyID=5468>



Bishop Hegarty pictured with (l-r) Congressman Crowley, New York; Congressman Gutierrez, Illinois; Congressman Neal, MA; Congressman Walsh; Vermont; members of the Friends of Ireland Delegation.

Bishop of Derry Seamus Hegarty provided a much needed lift to the plight of the undocumented during a busy visit to the United States last week. Bishop Hegarty, a pioneer in the fight for immigrant rights in this country, held masses in Boston and Philadelphia before traveling to WashingtonDC for meetings with clergy and politicians to discuss reform.

To coincide with the celebration of All-Saints and All-Souls Days, Bishop Hegarty celebrated a Mass at St Brendan's in Dorchester for the deceased in the Irish community. The purpose of the mass, which was attended by 500 people, was also to afford closure to undocumented Irishmen and women who had suffered loss back in Ireland but couldn't return to Ireland in order to attend funerals.

Bishop Hegarty then met with Consul General to Boston Michael Lonergan as well as representatives from the Irish Pastoral Center and their Board of Trustees where he thanked them for the terrific work that they had undertaken on behalf of the Irish community throughout the years.

After a similar stop-off in Philadelphia, Bishop Hegarty, armed with a strong message in support of comprehensive immigration reform, traveled to Washington DC where he met with Chaplains, members of Irish Lobby for Immigration Reform and Congressmen Neal, Walsh, Gutierrez and Crowley of the Friends of Ireland group.

Bishop Hegarty stressed the importance of keeping the message alive and of remembering the 50,000 or so undocumented Irish people in the United States. Bishop Hegarty is the Chairman of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants and has been a strong and constant voice for comprehensive immigration reform throughout the years.

For over 50 years, the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants (IECE) has sought to provide pastoral support to emigrants in cooperation with various apostolates, sister organizations and volunteers.

Ireland's "Immigration Bishop" Visits Philadelphia

<http://www.irishphiladelphia.com/Bishophegarty10409>

Photos from this event are on the website

Published: Nov 4, 2009

By: [Denise Foley](#)

Derry Bishop Seamus Hegarty with his Phillies shirt, a gift from the Philadelphia Derry Society.

As he prepared to say a Requiem Mass for the souls of the faithful departed at Philadelphia's Irish Center on Tuesday night, Dr. Seamus Hegarty, the Bishop of Derry, Ireland, paused to acknowledge the living who are far from peace.

The chairman of the Irish Episcopal Council for Emigrants, in Philadelphia briefly on a multi-city tour to meet with immigrants, was clearly moved by the stories he heard from undocumented Irish who had lost loved ones in Ireland and were forced to grieve alone, far from family and friends, because they could not return home. Illegal aliens can't risk returning to their country of origin for fear that they will not be allowed back in the United States where they may have American-born children.

"It's one of the things that really got to me," said the Bishop, who has served the Derry diocese since 1994. "It's a double tragedy for people who have lost someone and then aren't able to go home and grieve with their families. I lost my own mother when I was seven, so I know how they feel."

Bishop Hegarty spent part of the day at the Irish Immigration Center in Upper Darby. But not far from his mind were the immigrants he'd met in Boston. "They're hurting very badly there," he said. "I met many people who were bereaved and unable to go home and they were just devastated."

He used the message of the Gospel to urge those in attendance to put pressure on the political powers-that-be to pass comprehensive immigration reform bills that would create legal pathways for the undocumented to become citizens. In Matthew 25:31-45, Jesus promised that those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, welcomed strangers, clothed the naked, cared for the sick, and visited those in prison will sit to the right of him in heaven "because whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

"The attitude that 'as long as I'm alright, I don't care about you, is not the Irish way," he said in his homily. "We had nothing and we shared our nothingness with each other. You need to forge a community here that carries out the message that the interest of one is the interest of all. Reaching out to people is a gift and certainly will not go unrewarded."

The Philadelphia Donegal Association and the Derry Society participated in the Mass and the reception that followed. Bishop Hegarty also renewed old acquaintances, including Mary McHugh of Lindenwold, NJ, who knew the bishop as a youngster in Kilcar, County Donegal, where he was born. "I was born and raised in Scotland, but my mother grew up in Kilcar and my father was from the next village, so I spent my summers there," she said. "The bishop is actually related to me through my mother. When you grow up in these little towns and villages, you keep the connections."

Bishop Hegarty was on his way to Washington, DC, to meet with US legislators about immigration issues and was clearly aware of the effect the visit of one Irish bishop would have. "I'm sure they'll be very gracious and as soon as I'm gone they'll forget all about it," he said to laughter. "That's why you need to pressurize them. . . You can do something. We are all responsible for one another's welfare. Use your voice in a responsible and constructive way to try to improve the welfare of immigrants."

Siobhan Lyons, executive director of the Philadelphia Irish Immigration Center, was Bishop Hegarty's host for much of the day.

"We were delighted to welcome Bishop Hegarty to Philadelphia.," she says. "The Irish Apostolate has been a strong supporter of the Irish diaspora and we deeply appreciate the work they do on behalf of the Irish community in the United States. I particularly welcome their efforts in the campaign for comprehensive immigration reform and wish the bishop the best of luck in Washington DC.

"But Bishop Hegarty is right when he says we can't sit back and wait for other people to solve our problems," Lyons says. "We must use our voices and our votes to advocate for the most vulnerable in our community, and that includes the undocumented. I hope everyone will listen to his message and make sure their representatives know that the Irish community supports comprehensive immigration reform. "

Photos Taken in Boston and Washington, DC



Boston IIPC - Kieran O'Sullivan, John McCarthy, Sr. Marguerite Kelly, Bishop Seamus Hegarty, Brian Hanley



Boston Consulate M. Lonergan, Bishop, IPC Chairman Atty. Chris Lavery on the right side of table – Sr. Marguerite, Board Member Mathers



Attendees of the CARA Senior Club run by the Boston IPC is Mary Logue, Bishop & Sr. Eileen O'Leary



Fr. John McCarthy, Bishop Seamus Hegarty, Geri Garvey, Fr. Michael Leonard, Fr. Brendan McBride, Brian Hanley at IAUSA Board meeting in Washington, DC