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## ST. PATRICK WAS A MIGRANT, RECALLS PRELATE

### Voices Support for Undocumented Irish in the US

MAYNOOTH, Ireland, MARCH 16, 2010 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- St. Patrick was himself a migrant, and Irish are called to build a society that is truly inclusive, welcoming and respectful, according to an official with the Irish bishops' conference.

Bishop Seamus Hegarty of Derry, chair of the Council for Emigrants of the Irish Bishops' Conference, affirmed this in a statement today for Wednesday's feast of the national patron, St. Patrick.

"Mindful that St. Patrick was himself a migrant, we as a people are called to build a society that is truly inclusive, a society that is welcoming and respectful of people of different cultures, languages and traditions," Bishop Hegarty said. "While the number of immigrants coming to our country has decreased in recent times, our welcome and support for the new Irish living among us must continue unabated."

On the other hand, the prelate called for support of those Irish who have themselves emigrated to other lands. He said that the recession has brought emigration to change Ireland in ways not seen for 30 years.

"While our primary focus must be to ensure that we prevent another lost generation, we must also ensure that for those who decide to emigrate, they are neither abandoned nor forgotten," he said.

Bishop Hegarty drew particular attention to the plight of undocumented Irish in the United States.

"While hopes may have dimmed that comprehensive immigration reform will occur this year,

they have not been extinguished," he contended. "It is only by addressing this issue that people may be brought in from the margins of society, enabling them to integrate and contribute fully to their host community."

Though acknowledging each nation's right to determine its immigration policy, the prelate encouraged recalling that Jesus asks to be recognized in illegal migrants.

Citing Pope John Paul II, the bishop affirmed: "To welcome [the migrant] and to show him solidarity is a duty of hospitality and fidelity to Christian identity itself."