



**Nine Immigration Themed Resources for Lent—
Encouraging Faith Commitments in Solidarity with Refugees & Immigrants**

Focus: Temporary Protected Status

Scripture: *"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?....If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and....you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in." Isaiah 58:6, 9-10, 12*

Reflection: Theodore Roosevelt, in his 1910 speech "Citizenship in a Republic" spoke, "It is not the critic who counts." Instead, he says, credit should be given to the one "who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly." After decades in Babylonian exile, some of the community in the time of Isaiah 58 had now re-migrated back to Judah, and the temple had even begun to be rebuilt. But progress was slow, and the building construction challenges paled before the strains of tackling social and economic inequalities and suspicions between groups that threatened community stability and identity. Who really "belongs"? How deeply should new residents be welcomed? What does it mean to live faithfully in community? These were ancient questions, as well as current ones still.

Cutting through the chaos, the prophet clarifies that just treatment of our neighbors, far more than pious religious actions, has everything to do with properly honoring God. Because God deeply values the suffering who have lived under oppression, they—who we may say have been "marred by dust and sweat and blood"—are worthy of credit. They must be freed not detained, welcomed not blamed, fed not feared, and offered dignity not denigrated. Only by loving the vulnerable can any society become whole, and our streets and hearts become stable. Thus, Isaiah teaches us how welcoming and protecting our neighbors in need is a form of worship, and a way to show our love for God.



Harrisonburg's Salvadoran community leader urges protections for current TPS recipients. Photo from WHSV, Harrisonburg, VA.

Story: There are times when nearly all of us discover "unexpected realities" about towns we thought we've known for nearly all of our lives. It happened for me days ago, when I had the opportunity to accompany multiple Salvadoran TPS recipients from the hard-working rural town of Harrisonburg, Virginia (near my upbringing in the Shenandoah Valley) to visit their U.S. legislators on Capitol Hill. As parents around the table, they shared their experiences of working 21+ years in the U.S., paying taxes, and owning homes and vehicles. "My son is in high school, and I have worked at Perdue (poultry company) for many years" said one mother. "We want residency because our communities are living now with so much uncertainty" due to DHS' recent refusal to re-designate TPS status for Salvadorans.

Her 10 year old U.S. citizen daughter born in Harrisonburg urged leaders, "Please don't separate my family from me!" Their instability and pain calls me to honor Isaiah's plea by seeking to "repair the breach" in their hearts and community caused by removal of protections. Together with them, I will strive to urge Congress to pass a legislative solution for them and the nearly 300,000 TPS recipients to credit their value, and offer stability both to their families and to their town.

Actions/Resources:

- ⇒ See resources in the Interfaith Immigration Coalition's "TPS Toolkit" at: <http://www.interfaithimmigration.org/issues/tps/>.
- ⇒ Contact your US House legislators to urge support for H.R.4253, the American Promise Act, or the bi-partisan H.R.4384, the ASPIRE Act, and call your US Senators to urge they pass the S.2144, the SECURE Act. For each one, call: 202-224-3121.
- ⇒ Learn more about how you can act to support communities with TPS at: www.savetps.com.

Prayer: God who used the prophets to call us to faithfulness, help us to "worship you" by loving and freeing our neighbors in anxiety and pain. Move us beyond our fears to dare to get "in the arena" by listening, responding in compassion, and standing to support justice for the hurting. *Amen.*



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