Catholic theological tradition articulates three basic principles on immigration.

***First Principle:*** ***People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.***

Because of the belief that newcomers compete for scarce resources, immigrants and refugees are at times driven away, resented, or despised. Nevertheless, the first principle of Catholic social teaching regarding immigrants is that people have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families. This is based on biblical and ancient Christian teaching that the goods of the earth belong to all people. While the right to private property is defended in Catholic social teaching, individuals do not have the right to use private property without regard for the common good.

***Second Principle:*** ***A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control immigration.***

While individuals have the right to move in search of a safe and humane life, no country is bound to accept all those who wish to resettle there. Catholic social teaching is realistic: While people have the right to move, no country has the duty to receive so many immigrants that its social and economic life are jeopardized.

***Third Principle***: ***A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.***

The second principle of Catholic social teaching may seem to negate the first principle. However, principles one and two must be understood in the context of principle three. And all Catholic social teaching must be understood in light of the absolute equality of all people and the commitment to the common good. A country's regulation of borders and control of immigration must be governed by concern for all people and by mercy and justice. A nation may not simply decide that it wants to provide for its own people and no others. A sincere commitment to the needs of all must prevail. Even in the case of less urgent migrations, a developed nation's right to limit immigration must be based on justice, mercy, and the common good, not on self-interest. The Catholic Church teaches that every person has basic human rights and is entitled to have basic human needs met—food, shelter, clothing, education, and health care.