

## Rally calls for end to immigration raids (1.24.09)

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Rally calls for end to immigration raids More than 300 attend event in Green Bay

By Tony Walter

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"In Green Bay, many people are on edge, even those who are documented," said the Rev. Ken DeGroot, pastor at the church where a Hispanic ministry began 19 years ago. He said efforts are needed to ask President Barack Obama to end the raids until a comprehensive immigration law can be passed.

The event was sponsored by Justice Organization Sharing Hope and United for Action.

Erika Sanchez, 23, who emigrated from Mexico five years ago with her family, urged the members of the audience to sign petitions that will be sent to Obama next month.

"I have hope," Sanchez said. "I think he's going to solve a lot of issues. My hope is that a lot of people can come out of the shadows."

Bishop David Ricken of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay said immigration reform can help many people regain or preserve their dignity.

"We have the fundamental human gift of life," Ricken said. "There is a built-in right to life and dignity. We must practice what we preach as people of the Catholic faith, to reach out and make sure the fundamental needs are being met."

DeGroot cited the impact of ICE raids on families, saying they were leading to the "breaking up of families as well as the destruction of the integrity of the individual."

Dionis Montero, who came to the United States 16 years ago from the Dominican Republic and became a U.S. citizen six years ago, talked about the frustration he has encountered trying to bring his brother to this country.

"You cannot make it here legally," he said, adding that he has consistently followed legal steps and been denied. "We make this country better. We work hard."

Green Bay Alderwoman Celestine Jeffreys said a resolution from a recent meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors included a resolution seeking immigration reform while maintaining the laws.

"The mayors really want this to be fixed," Jeffreys said.