

# CRUX

Taking the Catholic Pulse

[John L. Allen Jr.](#)

[Inés San Martín](#)

[Crux Staff](#)

[Categories](#)

[Contact Us](#)

## Cardinal O'Malley: America has always had preferential option for the poor

[Christopher White](#) Jan 22, 2018  
NATIONAL CORRESPONDENT



(Credit: photo courtesy of New York Encounter, Patrycja Janowski.)

Share:      



NEW YORK - The United States of America - not just the Catholic Church - has always had a preferential option for the poor according to Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston.

"By and large, our immigrants were very poor people and even the words of the Statute of Liberty remember that there was a preferential option for the poor and the unwanted from the beginning of our country," said O'Malley.

His remarks came in an interview with Crux during last week's New York Encounter, an annual three-day cultural event organized by the Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation.

While the broad theme of the Encounter, "An 'impossible' unity," reckoned with the polarization in the country and the Church - it very often took on a specific focus around the issue of immigration which has spurred vigorous debate in light of recent controversy over President Donald Trump's alleged comments regarding Haiti and African nations.

O'Malley told Crux that Catholics, in particular, offer a critical voice in this national debate that should be used to both reject divisive language, and, given the history of the Church in the United States, should be empathetic to the plight of immigrants.

"We have to recall that we are an immigrant Church. The immigrants who have come to our country have made an incredible contribution to the life of the country, as well as the life of our Church," said O'Malley.

"I always say Europe would love to have our problems," he continued. "The children of our immigrants will be Americans. We have a great capacity to assimilate people into our country and it's been one of our strengths."

"I see this anti-immigration spirit that flares up occasionally in our history as an aberration. It's something that's un-American and it's certainly not Catholic, and we need to resist it...knowing that they [immigrants] are our brothers and sisters and make wonderful contributions in the long run to our country," he told Crux.

"Our country has been rewarded for our generosity to immigrants, and I think that if we become an unwelcoming, closed country, we're going to suffer the consequences of our selfishness."