October is Respect Life Month. Cardinal O’Malley, chairman of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), addresses a variety of threats to human life that become essential to the prayer and action of the Catholic Community.

Cardinal O’Malley stressed the link between a lack of faith and threats to those who are most vulnerable: “We live in a society of unbelief, where the unborn, the sick, and the elderly are often unwanted and endangered by acts of violence or neglect.” He noted especially the loss of “over fifty-five million unborn children’s lives” from 40 years of legalized abortion after Roe v. Wade, and the spread of legalized physician-assisted suicide in three states “allowing doctors to...end patients’ lives rather than provide much-needed comfort in times of pain and distress.”

In the face of these challenges, Cardinal O’Malley stressed hope in the love of God. By opening our hearts to his love and mercy, we let Christ dwell in us and we see more deeply the intricate and unique beauty of each person,” he said. “Though we are capable of sins against human life such as abortion, assisted suicide and euthanasia, we are not beyond Christ’s mercy.”

“We must personally engage others and share the truth about human life,” he said. “All members of the Church can bring healing to the world by upholding the beauty of human life and God’s unfailing mercy” especially to “those who have been involved in abortion.”

Inspired by Pope Francis’ call to all people of good will, the Respect Life Program’s theme for 2013-14 is: “Open your hearts to life!” Cardinal O’Malley explained the spiritual theme. “We must respond to Pope Francis’ call with great urgency. Opening our hearts to life in Christ empowers us for loving, merciful action toward others,” he said, “Only a tender, compassionate love that seeks to serve those most in need, whatever the personal cost, is strong enough to overcome a culture of death and to build a civilization of love.”

Begun in 1972, the Respect Life Program stresses the value and dignity of human life. It is observed in the 195 Catholic dioceses in the United States. The cardinal’s full statement in English and Spanish and other Respect Life Program resources for 2013-14 may be found at www.usccb.org/respectlife.

Citing World Migrant, Refugee Day Message From Pope Francis, Usccb Chairman Calls On House Of Representatives To Begin Consideration Of Immigration Reform Legislation

September 26, 2013
Pope Francis says people not to be part of throwaway culture
Archbishop Gomez urges House to move on path to citizenship for
undocumented - Workplace exploitation violates human rights

WASHINGTON—Invoking Pope Francis’ Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, released September 24, Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Migration, called upon members of the U.S. House of Representatives to begin consideration of comprehensive immigration reform legislation.

In a message, released in advance of the January 19, 2014, World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis called for a “change in attitude” toward migrants and refugees around the world, moving away from attitudes of “defensiveness and fear, indifference and fear,” typical of a “throwaway culture.” “Migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity,” the Holy Father wrote.

Archbishop Gomez echoed the Holy Father’s remarks, stating that the current situation in the United States undermines the human rights and dignity of migrants.

“Migrants have few rights in our economic system,” Archbishop Gomez said. “They are working for low wages in our restaurants and fields; our factories, gardens, homes and hotels. And these men and women have no security against sickness, disability or old age — and no protections against being exploited in the workplace.”

Calling on the House of Representatives to correct this situation, Archbishop Gomez added, “I urge our leaders in the House of Representatives to debate and pass a bill that gives these undocumented men and women a path to citizenship and full membership in our society.”

The U.S. Senate passed S. 744, comprehensive immigration reform legislation, June 27. The U.S. House of Representatives has yet to act on the Senate bill or its own version of immigration reform.


USCCB Position

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) opposes "enforcement only" immigration policies and supports comprehensive immigration reform. In Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, the U.S. Catholic Bishops outlined the elements of their proposal for comprehensive immigration reform. These include:

Earned Legalization: An earned legalization program would allow foreign nationals of good moral character who are living in the United States to apply to adjust their status to obtain lawful permanent residence. Such a program would create an eventual path to citizenship, requiring applicants to complete and pass
background checks, pay a fine, and establish eligibility for resident status to participate in the program. Such a program would help stabilize the workforce, promote family unity, and bring a large population "out of the shadows," as members of their communities.

**Future Worker Program:** A worker program to permit foreign-born workers to enter the country safely and legally would help reduce illegal immigration and the loss of life in the American desert. Any program should include workplace protections, living wage levels, safeguards against the displacement of U.S. workers, and family unity.

**Family-based Immigration Reform:** It currently takes years for family members to be reunited through the family-based legal immigration system. This leads to family breakdown and, in some cases, illegal immigration. Changes in family-based immigration should be made to increase the number of family visas available and reduce family reunification waiting times.

**Restoration of Due Process Rights:** Due process rights taken away by the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) should be restored. For example, the three and ten year bars to reentry should be eliminated.

**Addressing Root Causes:** Congress should examine the root causes of migration, such as under-development and poverty in sending countries, and seek long-term solutions. The antidote to the problem of illegal immigration is sustainable economic development in sending countries. In an ideal world, migration should be driven by choice, not necessity.

**Enforcement:** The U.S. Catholic Bishops accept the legitimate role of the U.S. government in intercepting unauthorized migrants who attempt to travel to the United States. The Bishops also believe that by increasing lawful means for migrants to enter, live, and work in the United States, law enforcement will be better able to focus upon those who truly threaten public safety: drug and human traffickers, smugglers, and would-be terrorists. Any enforcement measures must be targeted, proportional, and humane.

NB: All above citations are taken from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.