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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BISHOP MURPHY WELCOMES LABOR AGREEMENT REACHED BETWEEN BURGER KING AND COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS

WASHINGTON – The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), a Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)-supported organization of migrant farm workers, and the Burger King Corporation reached a groundbreaking agreement that will increase the price paid to farm laborers and establishes a code of conduct related to working conditions. The Immokalee, Florida-based coalition comprises more than 3,300 members throughout rural South Florida, primarily Latino, Haitian, and Mayan Indian immigrants working in low-wage jobs. Through the years, the Coalition has received grants from CCHD, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ (USCCB) anti-poverty program as well as the active support of Florida’s Catholic bishops, in particular the Diocese of Venice’s Bishop Frank Dewane and Bishop Emeritus John Nevins, in its struggle for better wages and working conditions.

Bishop William Murphy, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, issued a statement released at a Capitol Hill briefing attended by representatives of the Immokalee Workers, supporters and the Burger King Corporation. John Carr, executive director of the Committee read the statement, calling the agreement “an important step toward greater justice for farm workers in Florida and a responsible step forward for Burger King and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.” The agreement reportedly increases by one cent the per pound price paid to field workers for the produce they gather and provides an additional half-cent increase to be paid to growers to offset additional administrative expenses. Additionally, the agreement puts into place a code of conduct that addresses working conditions. The agreement builds on contracts signed in 2005 between the Immokalee Workers and the Yum! Brands, the parent company of restaurant corporations such as Taco Bell and KFC, and in 2007 with the McDonald Corporation.

In February, CCHD awarded its annual Sister Margaret Cafferty Development of People Award to CIW for being an example of empowerment in action. The award is presented annually by CCHD to a group or individual who best exemplifies a commitment to the development of people and the elimination of poverty in America.

Bishop Murphy's complete statement follows:

"The Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops welcomes and applauds the impressive agreement reached between the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Burger King Corporation. This is an important step toward greater justice for farm workers in Florida and a responsible step forward for Burger King and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

"This important agreement has been made possible first and foremost by the persistent work of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers in defending the lives, dignity and rights of farm workers. Our USCCB Domestic Committee wrote the leaders of Burger King to urge that they enter into dialogue to reach an agreement with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. We commend them for their leadership in taking this important step and hope they will serve as an example for others in the industry.

"The Catholic community has long supported greater justice for farm workers. In this particular case, the Catholic Bishops of Florida and the Catholic Campaign for Human Development have provided consistent and concrete support for the Coalition and for the legitimate demands for justice for farm workers.

"The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops hopes this remarkable agreement will lead to additional steps toward fair and just treatment for farm workers in Florida and elsewhere. We urge the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Burger King, tomato growers and their representatives, other food companies and consumers to actively support and advance-- and avoid actions which block or limit-- the provisions and promise of this important step forward for justice and for farm workers."

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