

**Statement during Media Availability to continue “Mission for Migrants” Urging
House of Representatives to Act on Immigration Reform
Archbishop Thomas Wenski of Miami
Member of the USCCB’s Committee on Migration
Washington, DC
May 29, 2014**

Our strength as a nation is drawn from our diversity and the unique talents of persons from around the world. Under our current immigration system, we weaken our country, not strengthen it. By not acting, we alienate a generation of young persons, who are the future leaders of our country. We are saying “we do not want you or your families.”

There is, then, much more at stake in this debate than the next election. The outcome of this debate—whether it be no action or, hopefully, passage of a bill-- will set the tone for the rest of this century. Either we can choose to turn away from our heritage and our track record of integrating immigrants from around the world, or we can embrace it.

Our elected officials are sent to Washington, not to worry about their next election, but to lead our nation into the future. We are seeing little leadership or statesmanship in Congress these days. This does not apply to one political party, but to both together.

Those who oppose immigration reform support the status quo. As we have seen over the past 25 years, the status quo, including record amounts of border enforcement, has not successfully addressed the challenge of illegal immigration. The number of undocumented has more than doubled at the same time we have dramatically increased our enforcement spending. The system is no longer sustainable. This does not even include the humanitarian and social costs both Cardinal O’Malley and Bishop Elizondo mentioned.

As Cardinal O’Malley mentioned, at Lampedusa Pope Francis talked about a “globalization of indifference” in the world to the plight of the migrant. This “indifference” is manifesting itself in the United States by our inability to create a humane immigration system. It is a stain on the soul of our nation.

Thank you.