

The Catholic News & Herald, Dec. 1, 2006

Calling for reform

Bishop Jugis, other bishops send letter to Congress on immigration

CHARLOTTE — Bishop Peter J. Jugis joined other bishops of the Province of Atlanta in a letter to Congress urging the passage of “comprehensive and fair” immigration reform at a national level.

Bishop Jugis, along with Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta, Ga.; Bishop Robert J. Baker of Charleston, S.C.; Bishop J. Kevin Boland of Savannah, Ga.; and Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Raleigh signed the letter to the senators and representatives for their respective states.

The bishops expressed strong belief that “immigration is a moral concern, impacting the human dignity and human rights of every person.”

Believing their collective voices to have a stronger impact, the bishops hoped to encourage the members of Congress to continue to work together for comprehensive reform, remembering the humanity of those who have moved to the United States from other countries to seek better lives for their families.

The bishops were specific about what they believe to be the essential elements of reform, including “policies to address the economic root causes of migration in the sending countries; reform of our legal immigration system, including a viable and workable path to citizenship; a temporary worker program which protects the rights of all workers; family-based immigration reform which reduces waiting times for family reunification; and the restoration of due process protections for immigrants.”

“We support these reforms because every day we witness the human consequences of an immigration system which is severely flawed,” wrote the bishops.

“The deportation of 12 million persons is not practical,” said Bishop Jugis in an interview with The Catholic News & Herald Nov. 28.

“Since, for the most part, these undocumented individuals are now putting down roots here and are productive people, contributing to society, an earned path to citizenship should be made available to them,” he said.

The ultimate goal of the letter is political action to enact legislation to “help heal our communities and provide for a secure and prosperous future for all our children,” said the bishops’ letter.

Bishop Jugis said that in discussions about undocumented immigrants, “we must remember that they are still fellow human beings, our brothers and sisters.”