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For more information, contact 404-885-7201:
Jessica Handley, Asst. Director of Communications

Georgia Roman Catholic Bishops Respond to Passage of Georgia Senate Bill 529

ATLANTA, GEORGIA, APRIL 3, 2006...The Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta and the Most Reverend J. Kevin Boland, Bishop of Savannah, today expressed their disappointment that the Georgia General Assembly has adopted the immigration-related provisions of Senate Bill 529.

The two bishops stated: "As pastors, we hear the fear and anguish of those who seek only to work and support their families whether with documents or without. SB 529, unfortunately, does little to meet the needs of our immigrant brothers and sisters or of the State as a whole. The bill is not comprehensive; it is not designed to bring immigrants out of the shadows, shut down the "black market" of smuggling, fake documents or exploitation; restore the rule of law at our borders, workplaces or communities, or encourage those who settle here to get on the path to citizenship."

To those who must remain in the shadows, the bishops pledged the Church's continued help in their spiritual and physical needs as enjoined by the Holy Scriptures. The bishops called on the Catholic people and all Georgians of good will to recognize the human dignity of all God's people in their daily life and in their support of public policy consistent with that dignity.

The two Catholic Bishops continue to believe that immigration reform must be addressed comprehensively on the federal level in a manner that respects the dignity of our immigrant brothers and sisters.

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As they have done through their recent pastoral letter on immigration reform, the two Catholic bishops continued their support for immigration reform that includes (1) economic and social development that addresses the root causes that force people to migrate, (2) the development of an earned legalization program for the undocumented, (3) expanded legal means for the reunification of families, (4) a temporary worker program that protects foreign and domestic workers alike, and (5) other reforms in due process access and asylum procedures. The federal bill most closely following these principles is now known as the “Comprehensive Immigration Act of 2006” as favorably reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee.

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Contact information for Bishop Boland:
Barbara King, Director of Communications, Diocese of Savannah
912-201-4100, bdking@diosav.org

Contact information for Archbishop Gregory:
Jessica Handley, Assistant Director of Communications, Archdiocese of Atlanta
404-885-7201, jhandley@archatl.com