

Accountability in the Food Supply Chain

April 4, 2006
Feast of St. Isidore

In December 2004, we the Bishops of Florida unanimously endorsed a resolution recognizing the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) for its significant efforts to bring human dignity to farmworkers in southwest Florida and elsewhere. Today, we also commend Taco Bell and its parent company for entering into a constructive and innovative agreement with the Coalition that is already improving the wages of hundreds of farmworkers.

We understand that through discussions with McDonald's Corporation, the Coalition is continuing its endeavors to improve the living conditions of the workers and their families. We urge McDonalds Corporation and Florida's agricultural industry to commit to a partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to identify effective and meaningful mechanisms for improving the income and working conditions of Florida's tomato harvesters. With creativity and commitment to the common good, such a partnership has the potential to lead the way toward badly needed changes in the broader system of agricultural labor.

We see merit in the CIW's focus on corporate accountability in the supply chain. We believe that change in our nation's agricultural labor system is possible, but workable solutions require that farmworkers be full participants, with buyers and grower-suppliers, in creating new policies and practices. This is a matter of respecting the workers' human dignity. It is also a practical matter of engaging the insights and knowledge of those who work in the fields, so as to devise solutions that address their just concerns.

We urge all parties to this discussion to acknowledge the undeniable injustices in our farm labor system, injustices largely rooted not in individual ill will, but in social structures that cry out for change. We also urge all concerned to treat each other forthrightly and with mutual respect, and to be open to the unique perspectives and knowledge of the others. We ask our parishioners, political leaders, and all people of good will to open their eyes to the concerns of our brothers and sisters in the fields and to pray for and support just and creative solutions.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop John J. Nevins
Diocese of Venice

Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

Bishop Robert N. Lynch
Diocese of St. Petersburg

Bishop Victor Galeone
Diocese of St. Augustine

Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, JCL
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Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

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