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Statement of Bishop Daniel E. Thomas on the Recent Immigration Action at Flower and Garden Centers in our Diocese

The Catholic Church in the United States is an immigrant Church with a long history of embracing diverse newcomers and providing assistance and pastoral care to immigrants, migrants, refugees, and people on the move. Our Church has responded to Christ's call for us to "welcome the stranger among us," for in this encounter with the immigrant, the migrant, and the refugee in our midst, we encounter Christ. This message has been consistently reinforced by the United States Catholic Bishops.

The Catholic Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all, especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances. (*Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*).

Respecting the role of government and law enforcement, we recognize our current immigration policies are broken and are actively contributing to the suffering and separation of vulnerable families, as evidenced in the most recent large-scale immigration action at Flower and Garden Centers in Sandusky, Ohio. No matter our political persuasion, when families are broken apart, as in this raid, we should all recognize that the common good is not served.

Already, through our local parishes in Sandusky, Norwalk and through Catholic Charities outreach, we are offering pastoral care and working directly with the families affected by this extreme action. The only way forward is, together, to strongly advocate for just, comprehensive and compassionate immigration policy reform. Only this can ensure the dignity due the family and the human person.

Please pray with me that civil dialogue and common sense solutions will prevail when it comes to addressing our immigration policies, even as we recall the words of sacred scripture: "When the foreigner resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the foreigner. The foreigner who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the foreigner as yourself, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 19:33-34 and 24:22).

The Diocese of Toledo, established April 15, 1910, encompasses 8,222 square miles in a mixture of urban and rural areas and spans 19 counties across Northwest Ohio, serving approximately 320,000 Catholics in 123 parishes. The Diocese includes Allen, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood and Wyandot counties.

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