

SunSentinel

# OPINION

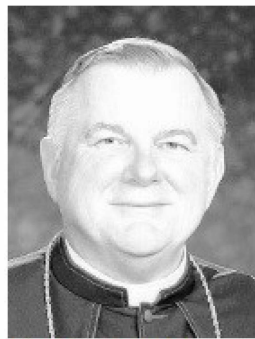
NANCY A. MEYER  
 Publisher & General Manager

ROSEMARY O'HARA  
 Editorial Page Editor

JULIE ANDERSON  
 Editor-in-Chief

## ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

# Unlike Texas, Florida shouldn't bar refugees from resettling in state



BY THOMAS  
 WENSKI

minors from Cuba through Operation Pedro Pan in the 1960s; resettled refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the 1970s; and continued resettling refugees when the U.S. Refugee Program began in 1980.

A recent Trump administration Executive Order created a new requirement that governors and county executives provide written consent before refugees are resettled in their respective state or county. Forty-two governors have gone on record supporting the continuation of refugee services in their states — 19 of the 42 are Republicans. Only the governor of Texas has announced the decision to discontinue resettlement — a decision apparently made without much public support. A court injunction has suspended the implementation of this requirement, and the administration is likely to appeal.

Refugees are uniquely deserving of humanitarian protection. Refugees are thoroughly vetted by the United States. They are screened by agencies including the National Counterterrorism Center, FBI, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense and Department

Catholic Charities agencies have a proud history in Florida as the longest-serving providers of refugee resettlement services in the state. Even before the establishment of the U.S. Refugee Program in 1980, Catholic Charities in Florida sponsored unaccompanied

of State. They must meet established criteria for refugee status: fleeing persecution for political or religious reasons. For example, some have been persecuted as a result of working with our U.S. military and government in their home countries. Others, including Christians from the Middle East, are fleeing religious persecution.

Often mentored by church volunteers and given resettlement support by our Catholic Charities agencies or other resettlement agencies, refugees and their family quickly integrate into American society, finding work and making a positive contribution to their adopted country.

Resettlement agencies, including our Catholic Charities, are preparing to submit proposals to the Office of Refugee Resettlement on Jan. 21 in order to continue this ministry of “welcoming the stranger” by serving the critical needs of this vulnerable population, fighting against human trafficking and reunifying families who have faced persecution.

Our Catholic Charities agencies look forward to the decision of local governments to continue welcoming refugees in those communities where we already serve and thus have longstanding partnerships with local service providers and employers in assisting refugees.

Albert Einstein was a refugee. Former Sen. Mel Martinez was a Pedro Pan unaccompanied minor. Today, Texas wouldn't allow either one to resettle there. Both Florida and the refugees would lose if we were to follow Texas' example.

*Thomas Wenski is the Archbishop of Miami.*