

Conference on Reconciliation and Change

Closing Remarks by Archbishop Wenski and Carlos Saladrigas

Carlos Saladrigas: Again, I would like to thank the audience here for putting up with us; it is quite a task. I appreciate your being here, I appreciate the fantastic questions. I would like to really thank the panelists for their words of wisdom, for sharing those valuable experiences with us, and for helping us begin to think through this process that is inevitable and is so important for the future of our country. Monsignor, if you would like to do some concluding remarks, then I will make some concluding remarks, and then we can all go home.

Most Rev. Thomas Wenski—Closing Remarks:

Like King Henry VIII said to his third wife, “I will not keep you too long.” One time when I was in Cuba, and I forget for what purpose, there was a press conference, and I was there with Cardinal O’Malley. The international press asked us a few questions and one of the reporters looked at me and said, “Well, what do you think that Cuba needs?” And I answered in one word: *hope*. And today, Cuba is bereft of hope. And that is seeing the fact that young people define hope as leaving the country. If Cuba is going to be home for all Cubans, that vision put forth by Benedict XVI during his visit there in March, then we have to bring a renewed sense of hope to the Cuban people. I think that was the whole purpose of John Paul II visit to Cuba in 1998. And as the Holy Pope Father Benedict XVI said, he went to Cuba to build upon the legacy of John Paul II. I think that we heard that the visit of John Paul II changed your (motions towards Roberto Goizueta) life, it also changed Carlos’ life as he watched the Pope’s mass here in Miami and not in Cuba, at least not that first visit. And one of the things I still believe very strongly, and I don’t think that you have to be a Catholic to appreciate it, if you take those speeches or homilies of the two Popes, and their visits to Cuba...you can find in them that roadmap, if you will, of a future of hope for the Cuban people. So I would conclude by saying to revisit those talks and analyze them. There are some phrases we still remember. John Paul II told the young people “You have to be the protagonists of the future of Cuba.” There are all sorts of gems that have to be fully explored, like a fruit that has a lot of juice to be squeezed out that would help us see, I believe, how we can be protagonists of that reconciliation, not only here where we have our own hurts and wounds to heal, but also on the island of Cuba. Thank you, Carlos, for this opportunity.

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Carlos Saladrigas—Closing Remarks:

Thank you Bishop Wenski. When we all came here, we thought of having this conference for the purpose of learning what reconciliation is all about, learning how you go about in this quest, in this process, learning from experiences, that while dramatically different from ours, can perhaps share some commonalities and some good ideas as to how we can apply these things to our own problems.

The one thing we need to realize is that we have a problem. It is a problem that has lasted for 54 years. In fact, it is a problem that has lasted for more than 100 years, because in many ways the Revolution came about to end the injustice and violence that preceded it and in that process it created its own injustice and violence. And we in turn have come here to escape that, and we in turn have created our own sort of problems and our own set of injustices. Therefore, what is in front of us as a nation is to get rid of a political culture that has been with us for over 100 years that has led to the situation today—and that is no easy task. If there was a little book out there that was a manual to get rid of a totalitarian government, believe me, we would all be reading from those pages and we would all be following; but there is no such thing.

The things that were mentioned today are going to take a dream; our capacity to dream. We have to dare to dream of a different Cuba and we have to dare to dream of a process that we can make and bring about the kinds of changes that we would all like, and bring about the

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reconciliation that we would all like. We need a game-changer. The business-as-usual approach we have taken does not work. We have to look for new ways, a new dynamic for an approach to the problem. Of course, we need to have courage; courage to find the key. And that is important. We have to make the move, we have to step forward. We cannot continue to accept the status quo as a given and that needs to change and that takes an enormous amount of courage to bring about that kind of level of change.

Lastly, the willingness to take risks. The safest thing to do in Miami is to resort to what has been comfortable for years, to what does not get you into any trouble, or engender any criticisms. It is a safe space of following the status quo. We need to dare to break that off. We need to say that we are willing to take risks. And we in the business world know that where there is no risk, there is no gain. We are used to taking risks, and that makes it, I think, a little easier for us to look at this process and say, “How can we break the status quo, and bring about the taking of some intelligent risks?”

And last, if this process of reconciliation is a roadmap, and I think it is, that means that there is a road. And that means that we need to stop thinking in terms of *them* and *us* because they also think of us as *them* and them as *us*. And we have to find the common ground so that all Cubans, regardless of whether we are here or whether we are there, can start thinking of ourselves as *us*, and that will get us to where we need to go.

And if there is something to take away today, it is an invitation to each and every one of us, in our own hearts to accept the invitation and to take one step forward and say “I want to change, I want to reach out, I want to be part of *us*.” Building the future is more important than repairing the past. Not that one is not important, but the other is way more important. And it is in building that future that we can all find the common ground and the commonality that we have been talking about today. Perhaps nothing can summarize this conference better than this quick video that we would like to show. So, again, thank you for participating.