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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Just as we experience the cyclical changing of seasons in Kentucky, so also do we find ourselves "hostage" to the personal aging process and all of its consequences. We anticipate life's changes, we undergo those changes and we acknowledge God's plan for all of us. Roman Catholic teaching celebrates life as a gift of a loving God and respects each human life because each is made in the image and likeness of God.

The Catholic Conference reminds us that it is consistent with church teaching that each person has the right to make his or her own health care decisions. Kentuckians have two advance directive options: the living will or the designation of a health care surrogate. Because of an addition to this law in the 1998 General Assembly, this single form now affords us the opportunity to indicate our willingness to become an organ donor at the time of death. Pope John Paul II, writing in *Evangelium Vitae*, described this act of generosity as "offering a chance of health and even life itself to the sick who sometimes have no other hope."

The Catholic Conference booklet, **Kentucky's Advanced Health Care Directive Law: A Catholic Perspective**, is available upon request from our Frankfort office. The booklet includes the surrogate/living will form and the organ donation attachment. You will note the young couple on the cover, a reminder to all of us that these decisions are best made in consultation with loved ones and prior to a health crisis.

Roman Catholic teaching celebrates life as a gift of a loving God ...

-Jane Chiles

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THE 2000 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Developing a legislative agenda is a combination of observation, research and consultation. As deficiencies become evident in new or existing statutes or administrative regulations during the legislative interim, the need to seek remedies in the 2000 General

Assembly becomes clear. These newly discovered needs as well as legal challenges to new statutes, new federal laws, national trends, and a host of other factors all begin to define CCK's legislative agenda for the year 2000. CCK staff and advisory committees use the lens of gospel values to focus on a proactive legislative agenda. Public policy issues arise all the time and CCK and its advisory committees are vigilant and alert in preparation for Kentucky's next General Assembly.

DURING A LEGISLATIVE INTERIM

CCK staff is often asked "So, what do you do in the Capital when the General Assembly is not in session?" The Conference and its advisory committees continues to work well after the Governor signs a bill into law. During the legislative interim, the job of monitoring newly created and re-authorized task forces, following the work of legislative interim committees and sub-committees, participating in various coalitions, and researching and commenting on administrative regulations consume much of the Conference's time

and energy.

A total of 21 legislative task forces were created or re-authorized in the 1998 General Assembly. Some 550 bills were signed into law, the majority of which require administrative regulations to be implemented. CCK is actively monitoring and supplying recommendations on the development of numerous administrative regulations and watching the progress of an assortment of special task forces. All these activities are conducted with an eye toward the next General Assembly in the year 2000.

A SERIOUS CHALLENGE FOR CATHOLICS

It never fails. During the General Assembly session, CCK receives a dozen or so phone calls, faxes or letters from individuals (generally Catholics) who want to know "why" CCK is supporting or opposing some piece of legislation. Invariably, the response to the caller is that the Bishops' position is based on the message of the Gospel, a particular encyclical, or some aspect of Catholic social doctrine. Many times the callers are genuinely surprised to learn that the Church has such an extensive and broad body of teaching.

CCK recognizes the value of lifelong learning and welcomes the new United States Catholic Conference's (USCC) publication, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*. Published in June 1998, the U.S. Bishops stress an urgent need to share the richness of Catholic social thought with Catholics. Contained in the report are specific recommendations by USCC's Task Force on Catholic Social Teaching and Catholic Education. Beginning its work in 1995, the Task Force and its subcommittees brought together leaders in Catholic education and social ministry to assess and strengthen current efforts and develop new directions for the future.

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To order copies of this publication (No. 5-281), call USCC toll-free at 800-235-8722, or visit their web site at www.nccbuscc.org.

The Bishops call for a new focus and commitment to integrate Catholic social thought more fully into "every level of Catholic educa-

tion and faith formation." The Task Force's final recommendation is that Catholics must address the "...pressing need to educate all Catholics on the Church's social teaching and to share the social

demands of the Gospel and Catholic tradition more clearly."

A brief and useful summary of Catholic Social Teaching's basic tenets and the fundamental principles as identified by recent Vatican encyclicals and episcopal documents is included as well as an extensive resource list. As a forward looking effort, the Task Force offers specific strategies and recommendations for incorporating Catholic social teaching in all forms of Catholic

"... it is clear that in some educational programs Catholic social teaching is not really shared or not sufficiently integral and explicit. As a result, far too many Catholics are not familiar with the basic content of Catholic social teaching... This poses a serious challenge for all Catholics, since it weakens our capacity to be a Church that is true to the demands of the Gospel."

education and formation. In its assessment process, the Task Force concluded that Catholics "need to build on the good work already underway to ensure that every Catholic understands how the Gospel and church teaching call us to choose life, to serve the least among us, to hunger and thirst for justice, and to be peacemakers."

The real life examples of how dioceses, educational institutions and parishes are exploring new ways of sharing Catholic Social Teaching are useful for parent, parishes, and schools. CCK's Education and Social Concerns committees are presently assessing how best to fulfill this call to action across the state.

WHAT WE BELIEVE • **Life and Dignity of the Human Person** All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race.

• **Call to Family and Community** The human person is both sacred and social. We realize our dignity and find fulfillment in relationship to God and with others in our families and communities. "We are one body; when one suffers, we all suffer." We are called to respect all of God's gifts of creation, to be good stewards of the earth and each other.

• **Rights and Responsibilities of the Human Person** These rights begin with the right to life. Each person has a fundamental right to adequate food, shelter, health care, education and employment. All people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of others in the wider society and to work for the common good.

• **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable** The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. The Church appeals to societies to recognize a special obligation to the poor and vulnerable. We are called to look first at public policy decisions in light of how they affect the poor.

• **Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers** Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. Persons have a right to productive work, decent wages, to organize and join unions, private property and economic initiative. The economy exists to serve people, not the other way around.

• **Solidarity** We are one global human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. Learning to practice the virtue of solidarity means learning that "loving our neighbor" has global dimensions in an interdependent world.

WITNESSING In June, CCK Executive Director Jane Chiles accepted the Department of Public Advocacy's 1998 Citizen Advocacy award. CCK was recognized for its advocacy on behalf of public defenders funding and criminal law legislation. The commendation was due to CCK's work on the Racial Justice Act during the 1998 Kentucky General Assembly. In accepting the award, Ms. Chiles stated, "The Church must take an active role in shaping the judicial system and we must be a voice for the voiceless." The Department of Public Advocacy



In August, CCK once again staffed a tent at the infamous Fancy Farm Picnic. CCK and KLEA staff distributed materials and conducted voter registration. The historic picnic is the annual summer festival hosted by St. Jerome Church in Fancy Farm, Kentucky.

recognizes individuals and organizations which demonstrate civic advocacy.

In early July, CCK organized and participated in an ecumenical prayer service and visit on Kentucky's Death Row at Eddyville State Penitentiary. We continue to be impressed with the vitality of spiritual life among these men. Since that visit, 6 more persons have been moved to the Row for a total of 36 prisoners and 38 cases of persons facing execution in the Commonwealth.

Catholic Conference staff along with other human rights and religious groups delivered

testimony in opposition to the creation of a new "supermax" facility within the walls of Kentucky State Penitentiary at Eddyville. Prisoners confined in the "supermax" are denied human contact and confined for 23 hours a day. The extreme human isolation, the potential for rapid deterioration of social skills and mental health, incumbent problems for readjustment to community life, along with the total disregard for rehabilitation were all factors in CCK taking this position of opposition to this extreme form of incarceration.

In September, CCK acted as a co-signer of an amicus brief in the Anthem - Blue Cross Blue Shield conversion litigation being brought by Attorney General Ben Chandler. Two additional amicus briefs were filed by Consumers Union and the National Association of Insurance Commissioners in support of the Attorney General. The Catholic Conference position is that Anthem violated the terms of irrevocable charitable trust when it converted from not-for-profit to mutual to for-profit and failed to set aside the charitable assets accrued as a not-for-profit for continuing charitable use in the community. A motion to deny participation as an amicus was rejected by Franklin Circuit Court on November 5. A motion before the court for summary judgement is pending and a decision is expected as early as January.

In early November, Kentucky's four Bishops hosted the annual CCK health care ministry meeting held in Louisville. The meeting was attended by some 60 religious women health care sponsors, hospital CEOs, long-term care administrators, and health system representatives. Bob Stevens, an attorney with Deters, Benzinger & Lavelle, addressed the group and led a dialogue on current challenges to the health care ministry. Currently in Kentucky, Catholic health ministry includes 13 Catholic hospitals, 15 long-term care facilities and numerous home health agencies.

KLEA All across the state, Catholic school parents are growing more excited about the issue of tax credits in the 2000 General Assembly. From a family cookout at Holy Trinity School in Harlan, to the PTO meeting at St. John's in Paducah, KLEA staff and Board members have received a warm welcome and rousing applause as they speak about a needed tax break for Catholic school parents.

Legislative support for tax credits appears solid in both the Senate and House chambers. KLEA staff and Board members John Humkey, Mark Guilfoyle and John McCarty have conducted a series of meetings with key legislators to develop successful strategies for the 2000 General Assembly. KLEA's goal in 2000 is to introduce legislation for a \$500 tax credit for families of

non-public school students with adjusted gross income under \$75,000.

The tax credit proposal has an estimated *and modest* impact of \$12 million annually according to the Legislative Research Commission. Additionally, considering the estimated \$400 million dollars that Catholic school parents save the state, a tax credit is simply a matter of fairness.

KLEA staff and Board members plan to continue building grass-roots support for the tax credit as the 2000 General Assembly approaches. KLEA always welcomes the opportunity to speak to parents and school groups. If your school is interested in scheduling a speaker on tax credit legislation, contact Cathy Greene in our Frankfort office 502-875-8010.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LIFE Jackie Carlsen knows what it takes to put her faith into action. Since beginning her ministry at Opportunities for Life in September of 1986, Jackie has extended a message of hope to literally thousands of women experiencing untimely pregnancies. Jackie stated that the source of her strength is the special understanding she brought to OFL. Jackie said, "I've walked in the shoes of those individuals who have called the OFL hotline."

Jackie's vision for OFL's future is its continued growth statewide and broader outreach to those women in need. In addition to making herself available to answer OFL hot

line calls, Jackie plans to dedicate more time to her family, poetry writing and dollmaking.

The Catholic Conference regrets that Jackie will be leaving her position in January of 1999. But, OFL's loss is her family's gain. Jackie will be missed and long remembered for her dedication to life.



Jackie Carlsen, Opportunities for Life

CCK STANDING COMMITTEES

Ecumenism

Education

Family Life

Finance

Health Care

Hospitals

KLEA

Long-term Care

Prolife

Social Concerns

HAROLD McQUEEN, JR. - USCCCC AWARD

One year after his execution in Kentucky's electric chair, Harold McQueen's message to teens is still resonating across the country. In August, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky received the 1998 United States Catholic Conference Catholic Communications Campaign

Award for "It Could Happen To You," the Harold McQueen, Jr. story. Sr. Mary Kevan Seibert of the Lexington Diocese accepted the award for the Conference in Montreal, Canada. To date, CCK has distributed 1,000 copies of the video and study guide across the country. The video and study guide remain available to interested individuals and organizations at no charge by calling Kim O'Reel at CCK.

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

The words of Pope John Paul II in Baltimore remain as inspiring now as they were during his 1995 visit. "Democracy serves what is true and right when it respects inviolable and inalienable human rights, when it makes the common good the end and criterion regulating all public and social life..."

It was with this spirit that CCK attempted to conduct its annual post-primary, candidate questionnaire survey. The survey contained a broad range of

issues important to Catholics and was delivered by certified mail to all the candidates for Federal office. As the deadline (and extension) for returning the survey passed, in no one race did CCK receive surveys which were returned by both candidates.

As in years past, CCK sought to use the questionnaire to promote responsible participation in the democratic process. The questionnaires are meant to be a substantive means for voters to use in discerning their choices for representation. CCK remains hopeful for better participation in future elections and to publish the survey results in the 2000 election cycle.



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Our Best Kept Secret