

Opportunities for Life Expands Ministry

"I received a call on the hotline from a 16-year old young woman who was 5 ½ weeks pregnant. She was crying as she told me that her parents were making her have an abortion, and she didn't want to have one. Her parents, who themselves had experienced an unplanned pregnancy as teenagers, did not want the same thing to happen to her. She continued to cry as she talked. I told her that I didn't think her parents could force her to have an abortion and that I would put her in touch with someone who could work with them in this situation. She clearly was nervous and afraid, and I could not keep her on the phone for long, though I encouraged her to call back for help. After hanging up, I filed a report and put her on the Opportunities for Life prayer line. Later she called back, and I found out that she decided not to have the abortion. She continues to call back occasionally for encouragement. Thank you God for hearing our prayers."

The story above from an Opportunities for Life (OFL) hotline volunteer exemplifies the outreach to those facing crisis pregnancies. Founded in 1986 by the Roman Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, OFL has operated a daily 24-hour hotline to help women (and their partners and parents) throughout the state of Kentucky. OFL has responded to thousands of callers since the organization's beginning. Today, 94 volunteers serve OFL, including 31 who serve as prayer volunteers for the OFL prayer line.



"My volunteer commitment has been an outreach ministry to the sanctity and preciousness of life; both the life of the mother and the life of her unborn child," said Gia Phelps, a 10-year volunteer from St. Peter Claver Parish in Lexington. "The anguish of some of our callers can almost break your heart, and I always think there but for the grace of God go I. What kind of decision would I be making if I did not truly know God's love and how

much Jesus loves me? How can many of our callers comprehend the sacred life of the unborn child forming in her womb, when she does not see her own life as sacred because she has been trapped in cycles of poverty or abuse or never known respect or love herself?"

Volunteers offer callers a listening ear, a compassionate presence, and referral to practical resources and social services. Kim Rougeux, a 12-year volunteer from St. Patrick Parish in Louisville, points to the need women in crisis pregnancies have for someone who can offer care and connections: "We are present to our callers; affirming their lives and the lives of their unborn children. Many of our callers have serious spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical needs and when we listen to them with the love of Christ, we confirm the

dignity of their lives and give them the opportunity to find healing and growth by offering additional resources that we can provide them."

Lupita Shemansky, a volunteer from St. Henry Parish in the Diocese of Owensboro, serves on the Spanish-speaking hotline. She believes that callers welcome the prayerful and spiritual focus of this ministry: "Most of the women I speak with do not want an abortion but believe that because it is legal it is a solution to their problem. We try to give them another perspective."

For many years, OFL has operated as a network of statewide volunteers. Volunteers were recruited and trained by a single director who operated out of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky office in Frankfort and provided them resources. Opportunities For Life's work was guided by an advisory board of members who generously provided input to the OFL director and Bishops. However, changes in the environment precipitated a discernment process to explore new directions in OFL's organization and delivery of services.

Since 1986, when OFL was founded, two additional Catholic Charities agencies have been established in Kentucky and the number of independent pregnancy resource centers in many communities in the state has increased. To insure that OFL's ministry continued in the most effective way possible, the Bishops of the state established an "Ad Hoc Committee on the Pastoral Care of Women in Crisis Pregnancies" in 2009 to determine what form the services of OFL should take in the future.

This committee, chaired by Fr. Richard Sullivan, pastor of St. Michael Parish in Louisville, Ky., offered the following recommendations, which the Bishops accepted in May 2010:

- Opportunities for Life will continue its unique ministry of providing a 24-hour crisis hotline while becoming part of Catholic Charities' Caring Connection program. The Caring Connection promotes the life-giving options of parenting and adoption by providing compassionate services — including social services and par-

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Death Penalty Takes Toll on Society; Executions Not Solution to Violence

By Robert J. Castagna
Executive Director



In the first hour after midnight on June 18 at the Utah State Correctional Facility in Draper, Utah, five marksmen armed with .30 caliber Winchester rifles stood about 20 feet away from Ronnie Lee Gardner and fired. When the rifles fired their bullets at 12:15 a.m., one rifle was not loaded so the marksmen intentionally do not know who actually killed Ronnie Lee Gardner. In the name of the people of Utah and of the United States, Gardner was pronounced dead at 12:17 a.m.

Since the U.S. Supreme Court permitted capital punishment in the United States to be reinstated in 1976 after a ten year legal moratorium, Gardner's was the third execution by firing squad in Utah and the United States. Gary Gilmore's January 1977 firing squad execution was the first, and the January 1996 execution of John Albert Taylor was the second. To place his execution in historical context, Gardner's execution by firing squad was the 41st of 50 executions in 160 years of Utah's administration of the death penalty.

Although the Utah legislature mandated lethal injection in 2004 as the default execution method, those convicted before that mandate can choose the firing squad. Four other Utah death row inmates are still eligible for firing squad executions.

Variouly described as "barbaric," "archaic," "cold blooded" and "efficient," the firing squad harkens back to the frontier era of justice. Executions by guillotine and the electric chair were introduced as seemingly more humane methods of execution. Since its introduction in the early '80's, lethal injection has been used in more than 1,000 executions; but lethal injection is not without its own problems of administration in finding the receptive vein and in actually delivering the toxic drugs into the arm of the condemned.

ABC News interviewed Fordham University Professor of Law Deborah Denno who commented: "People think lethal injection is more humane because it's related to medicine and doctors and a peaceful way of death, but in reality it's not. It is an irony isn't it that the method we think is most barbaric to our perception and in our history is in fact the method that is most humane."

Is the method of execution the critical issue before society? Isn't the real issue the death penalty itself and ultimately the abolition of capital punishment?

Earlier this year Kentucky's Department of Justice and Public Safety Cabinet adopted protocols for capital punishment for both lethal injection and electrocution methods of execution. At the request of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and recognizing that state employees of the Department of Corrections may have moral or

ethical objections to participating in an execution, the state administrative rules now permit an employee to conscientiously object to participating in the administration of the death penalty.

When Pope John Paul II celebrated Mass in St. Louis on January 27, 1999, his homily appealed to our faith and conscience as persons called to proclaim the Gospel of Life:

"The new evangelization calls for followers of Christ who are unconditionally pro-life: who will proclaim, celebrate and serve the Gospel of life in every situation. A sign of hope is the increasing recognition that the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil. Modern society has the means of protecting itself, without definitively denying criminals the chance to reform. I renew the appeal I made most recently at Christmas for a consensus to end the death penalty, which is both cruel and unnecessary."

In its statement, *A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice: A Kentucky Call to Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration* (Revised December 2005), the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Board of Directors joined Pope John Paul II's vision and message by declaring: "Kentucky should abolish the death penalty. Kentucky's Governor should commute to life imprisonment without parole those sentenced to death."

Michael Burdell, Utah attorney, appearing in a Salt Lake City courtroom on April 2, 1985, was Ronnie Lee Gardner's murder victim as Gardner attempted to escape and shoot his way out of the courthouse where he appeared on a previous murder charge.

Joseph Burdell, Michael's father, and other family members were opposed to Gardner's execution: "Twenty-five years is a long time. He's not the same man." Donna Taylor, Michael Burdell's niece, commented on Gardner's execution: "This is the last thing Burdell would have wanted. I just hate that his family has to go through this now." She added: "I think Mike will be right there to welcome him home." She touched on the role of forgiveness in the life of the victim's family: "You just forgive, you just do; and if you don't forgive, it just hurts you. Michael is at peace. He's fine."

As the Commonwealth of Kentucky contemplates the inmates on death row and the role of capital punishment in its criminal justice system, may Kentuckians be mindful of the moral issues related to the death penalty and the role of forgiveness in our own lives and in the life of society. Because the killing of the condemned is performed in our name, the death penalty impacts all of us. Let us pray for the victims of crime, their families and friends and for those in our penal institutions who also have families and friends who accompany them on the journey of life.

The Church Both In and For Every Place

By Rev. Marian M. Taylor



The great insight of the World Missionary Conference of 1910 was that the Church should be present *in* every place on the globe, and that all of the Christian traditions should cooperate to make it so. Now, 100 years later, this insight has deepened

and evolved in a wonderful way that makes the Church even truer to its Head.

At the centenary event in Edinburgh, Scotland, I could hear from many quarters that the Church in each place on the globe should be present *for* every place. This is more than just a change of a preposition. It signifies two momentous changes for us all. First, it means that the Church now takes more seriously that God's redemption is for all of creation, not just the human beings in it. Second, it means that as we do ministry in each place where we find ourselves, we are drawing on the insights gained in relationship with fellow believers all over the world.

A Bit of Background

In 1910, after two years of undergoing an extensive study process concerning eight major topics, 1,200 representatives of agencies that sent missionaries around the world gathered in Edinburgh. They were mostly Protestants from Europe and the United States, and there were fewer than 20 church leaders from elsewhere. But they were very connected and committed, and they believed they had an historic opportunity to evangelize the whole world if only they could be more astute and cooperative. They temporarily banned divisive theological topics from their midst and rolled up their sleeves to work on practical matters in mission. The Great Commission – to make disciples of all nations – was seen as important enough to call people past the walls that divided their Christian traditions.

This event, with its vision of a world Church and its insistence on overcoming disunity, is credited with launching the modern ecumenical movement. A tradition of holding regular ecumenical conferences continued the common discernment needed for the churches to adjust course through the last century. And course adjustments were needed; the 1910 participants did not foresee Communism, world wars, the end of colonialism, or the secularization of some continents nor the rapid evangelization of others.

This Year in Edinburgh

The centenary event from June 2-6, 2010 was by design more scholarly and smaller than the 1910 event. Andrew Anderson, the chair of its organizing committee, said the

event was “a landmark in ecumenical togetherness in mission” because it brought together Catholics, Evangelicals, Orthodox, Pentecostals and Protestants who affirmed a common call to mission. The delegates represented 202 organizations, 115 denominations and 77 nationalities, and 62 mother tongues. The increased diversity of the world Church is inspiring for what it says about the Gospel message's attraction across cultures, and what it says about a century of learning about partnership and leadership development.

More important, though, is that the growing diversity has enriched and enlarged understandings of Christian faith. To give but one example, encounters with less dualistic cultures have helped Western Christians rediscover the importance of nature, and God's intentions for all of creation. This realization is spreading far and wide; at the conference a Pentecostal speaker from Korea quoted his church founder's realization that “the world” God loves in John 3:16 is not just the people in it.

Also, as understanding enlarges, our experiments in being faithful witnesses in each place where we find ourselves increasingly benefit from insights gained in our global and ecumenical encounters. For instance, Dr. Teresa Rossi, a Catholic professor in Rome who is vibrant with ecumenical passion, told conference participants about a curriculum for young children designed to prepare them for a life of avid pursuit of Christian unity. Others spoke about efforts to learn from Eastern Christian traditions that emphasize the presence of God during worship, because this emphasis helps meet the hunger of secularized youths for something that transcends them. We heard about churches formed by immigrant communities that serve – sometimes on a grand scale – in the most improbable places. For me, the most exciting part of the conference was the pervasive spirit of innovation and willingness to learn from each other for the sake of ministering more effectively in each unique circumstance.

In Kentucky

Kentuckians are experiencing a vast increase in the connections between our local churches in Kentucky and Christians in or from other lands. The faculty and student body of seminaries are more diverse and more theology classes include readings from non-Western sources. Immigrants and refugees bring their own understandings of how to “be Church.” And many of us are also involved in mission partnerships with Christians in other lands.

These changes are the subject of this year's annual assembly sponsored by the Kentucky Council of Churches. Our keynote speaker will be the same professor, Dr. Dana Robert, who keynoted in Edinburgh, and her book on the global spread of Christianity will be available. You do not have to be an official delegate in order to register and attend the Bowling Green event on October 14-15, so please call our office at 859-269-7715 for more details. I hope to see you there!

The Day Our American Dream Died

It was a morning like any other. The alarm went off at 4:30 a.m., I hit snooze a couple of times and then reluctantly climbed out of bed trying not to wake my three-year-old daughter. My wife stirred, squinted, looked at the clock and rolled out of bed to start the coffee. The sun had not yet risen, so the house was dark as I started getting ready for work. I thanked God for another day, for my health, for my beautiful wife and daughter and for my two faithful sisters who had moved in with my little family to help out and keep us company. The four of us together had truly been blessed by God and with a lot of hard work had been able to save up to buy a small house in a small town and over the years have fixed it up little by little. We were even able to send some money back to our mother to help pay off some of her debt.

I could smell the eggs my wife was frying and heard my sisters taking their showers across the house. I wondered if they remembered there was choir practice that night at church and made a mental note to remind them. I again thanked God for our parish community which has been such a vital and central element in our lives in this foreign land. In our hometown in Mexico we rarely attended Mass, but here it seems that we cling to our faith so much more strongly and have come to truly appreciate our Catholic heritage. We have learned more about our faith than I had ever imagined we would and through our leadership in the parish have had the chance to serve the community and minister to the more recent immigrants as they searched for their own church home.

As we all sat down in the kitchen for breakfast my sleepy-eyed daughter came out of the bedroom ready for her daily dose of Froot Loops. I laughed imagining my mother's reaction to her granddaughter already at three years old so accustomed to "American" food. She already chastises me for the way my daughter mixes her English and Spanish when we call home on Sunday afternoons. Sometimes I have to remind myself that my daughter was born here and will inevitably be a mix of our Mexican heritage and her own homeland of rural western Kentucky. Although I wish my mom could be a stronger influence on my daughter, I also know that my hometown is no longer a safe place to raise a family. My siblings are always telling me of the violence caused by the drug traffickers and I thank God for this little piece of land in a quiet town where my daughter feels safe enough to run and play in our yard.

My wife went to the living room with my daughter to turn on the morning cartoons when we all heard someone banging on the front door. Who could be knocking at such an early hour? Is there an emergency with my brothers-in-law in the next town over? We could certainly sense the urgency of the knocking. My

This is a true story of a family in the Owensboro Diocese. It is played out over and over again all over our Diocese, our state and our country. The details may change but the underlying story remains the same. The American dream is dying for so many immigrant families. Our neighbors, our fellow parishioners, members of our one family under God, are suffering the effects of a broken immigration system and international policies and realities outside of their control. Our bishops have asked Congress and the administration to fix this broken system with just and comprehensive immigration reform. Please join them by adding your voice to the Justice for Immigrants Campaign in support of a just and comprehensive reform of our immigration system. Go to www.justiceforimmigrants.org to find out how. As long as we remain silent the stories will continue.

— Patti Gutiérrez, Justice for Immigrants Campaign Coordinator, Catholic Charities of Owensboro

older sister pulled back the curtain, quickly pulled back her hand and turned to us with a sense of shock clearly on her face as she described the scene outside our window. There were almost a dozen cars – local police, sheriff department vehicles and even a couple of unmarked cars. There were police officers surrounding the house and the person banging on our door was not a concerned relative but rather a uniformed man with ICE POLICE on his jacket.

I couldn't believe it. Surely there had been a mistake. My family hadn't committed any violent

crimes. We were not armed and dangerous. Could all of this ruckus really be about something we had done? I opened the door and the entire entourage barged into my living room guns in hand. I was dumbfounded. My head was spinning as I was finally able to answer yes, I was in fact the man whose name appeared on the arrest warrant the official had and I had in fact been served a voluntary deportation order from an immigration judge. As I tried to explain I was handcuffed and brought down to the driveway and placed in a police car.

Alone in the dark car my mind drifted back to that fateful day when the judge had told my wife and me that we were to pack our things and leave the country within 90 days. We were shocked. We had been assured that we qualified for asylum and thought this court visit was just a formality – part of the complicated immigration system we had tried so hard to understand. When we had come three years earlier we were so desperate for a work permit we were willing to pay whatever it took to go through the paperwork and jump all the hoops. We had just learned that we were pregnant with our first child and were looking forward to building our life in a safe, peaceful town. How could we go back and raise our daughter among drug war violence? How would we ever make ends meet and make a home in a place practically void of opportunity? That's when we made the difficult decision to stay. We knew it was a risk, but we felt we had no choice.

I was jolted back to reality as the immigration official and police officers filed out of my house...alone...where was the rest of my family? What was going to happen to them? It was the next day that I was finally able to communicate with them and find out what had happened. My wife and daughter were allowed to stay in the house but were summoned to immigration court in Louisville. I was detained, moved several times then deported back to Mexico. My wife was given a voluntary departure order and had to return to immigration court each week and in four weeks she had bought their plane tickets, sold whatever she could, packed what they could carry and she and my daughter boarded a plane back to Mexico. Our American dream had died.

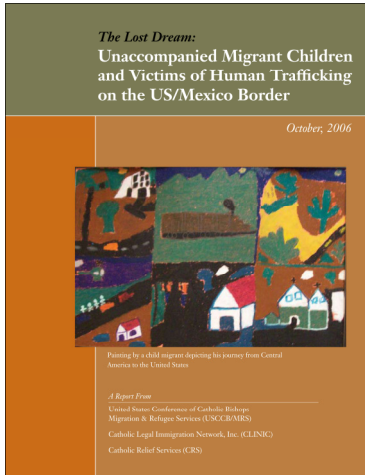
“We just want to join our parents.”

By Sister Sandra Delgado, O.P

A 12-year old girl and her 9-year old brother travel north on the ‘beast’, the train that carries them from Central America through Mexico with hopes of reaching the border. They are not traveling on a passenger train but on top of or under a cargo train or in a boxcar along with other men, women and children making the trip north to the United States. This young girl and her brother are depicted in the HBO documentary ‘Which Way Home’ traveling by themselves going to join their parents. They, like millions of children, were left in their home country by parents who traveled to the U.S. in search of a better life for their families. The producers of the documentary don’t know if the girl and her brother ever made it to the U.S. One day they just never got back on the train.

These children, known as Unaccompanied Alien Children by U.S. authorities, face numerous dangers, not much different than do adults who make this journey. The children, however, are much more vulnerable. Why do these children make such a trip?

In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) report, *The Lost Dream: Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Victims of Human Trafficking on the US/Mexico Border*, children spoke with the bishops of the dire poverty in



which their families lived. These are children who worked at home to help feed the family. Now they are sent to the U.S. to be the major provider for the family.

Other children have been left behind by their parents in the care of a grandmother, an aunt, their godparents, or a trusted friend. They haven’t seen their parents for years; some don’t remember their parents. They have the desire to join the parents they don’t know. Some children set out on their own to find their parents. Others are sent for by their parents; they will likely be entering the country ‘without inspection’, the legal term for entering illegally. Sometimes the children are separated from those who are smuggling them across the border.

Unaccompanied alien children come to the U.S. from many different countries and by different means. It is hard to know how many children arrive at their destination. The statistics gathered refer to those who have been detained by the Department of Homeland Security. According to DHS in 2005

there were 114,563 individuals under the age of 17 years detained for ‘entry without inspection’. Only 7,787 of these minors were detained by the Office of Refugee Resettlement and from January to September, 35,078 minors had been deported. Most of the deportations involved Mexican youth. Under an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico, Mexican nationals are frequently deported without the opportunity for a hearing. This has changed for youth but their legal avenues are limited. There are three main avenues for unaccompanied alien children to remain in the US: obtain asylum as a refugee, be granted special immigrant juvenile status, and through the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. It is difficult for an adult to maneuver through the complexities of the immigration system. Without the assistance of a trustworthy and dedicated child advocate, this task is impossible for a child.

Due to past and current efforts on the part of USCCB, immigrant advocate groups and child and youth advocates the laws and policies pertaining to immigrant youth detention have changed. There is still room for improvement. Perhaps we can begin with Comprehensive Immigration Reform that includes family reunification.



Editor’s note: The Catholic Conference of Kentucky worked closely with several others to pass legislation making human trafficking a violation of state law. In 2007, Catholic Charities of Louisville received funding to operate the Kentucky Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking. This project provides technical assistance to local coalitions throughout

the state, as well as services to victims of trafficking. For more information please visit the Rescue and Restore website: <http://www.rescueandrestoreky.org/>

RESOURCES

DVD – “Posada” – Loyola Productions and “Which Way Home” – HBO documentary

The Lost Dream: Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Victims of Human Trafficking on the US/Mexico Border; USCCB – Migrant and Refugee Services, Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. and Catholic Relief Services; October 2006

Children Without Borders: a Mapping of the Literature on Unaccompanied Migrant Children to the United States; Migraciones Internacionales, Volume 5, Number 3, Jan. –June, 2010

Update on Legal Relief Options for Unaccompanied Alien Children Following the Enactment of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008, AILA InfoNet Doc. No. 09021830

A Great Prayer for Life, an Urgent Need

By Rev. Richard Meredith

Prayer for life, before all else, is always praise and thanksgiving, celebrating and welcoming the magnificent gift of God, the Author of Life. Given the magnitude of the assault against human life in our world, however, it is also a cry and petition to God for deliverance from evil. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* (2001) introduced its reflection on the role of prayer and worship on behalf of the cause of life (§IV) with this citation of Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, no. 100:

A great prayer for life is urgently needed, a prayer which will rise up throughout the world. Through special initiatives and in daily prayer, may an impassioned plea rise to God. ...Let us therefore discover anew the humility and the courage to pray and fast so that the power from on high will break down the walls of lies and deceit: the walls which conceal from the sight of so many...the evil of practices and laws which are hostile to life.

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky's pastoral plan, *Reverence for Life, The Pursuit of Justice* (1999), likewise, urged the pre-eminent role of prayer and liturgy (§II, B) in the sustained conversion needed in the cause of life.

It should be clear, by now, to everyone that this is not a short term urgency or commitment. The Church's call for us to pray for the cause of recognizing, reverencing, and protecting human life is and will remain essential to our fidelity as Catholic Christians from now on. There is simply no foreseeable point in the history stretching out before us in which we will have secured the cause of life against the threat of the seduction of death. The atrocities against human life and dignity in the 20th century, which continue into the 21st, have awakened the Church in a new way to the spiritual precariousness of human life in our world. May God preserve us from taking the sanctity, dignity, and security of human life for granted ever again.

Today we are conscious of a vast range of outright abominations against human life: legally sanctioned abortions on the scale of millions annually; untold levels of abortifacient contraception; the artificial, large scale creation of and destructive experimentation on human embryos; human cloning; legally sanctioned euthanasia and assisted suicide; genocides; the use and threat of weapons of mass destruction; indiscriminate, terroristic killings; trafficking in human lives and immorally obtained human organs; the abuse and neglect of the young, the elderly, and other vulnerable persons; and the murders of universally recognized criminal killings. The manifestations of what Pope John Paul II called a "culture of death" are mind-numbingly extensive.

There are also more ethically complex threats to human life. Properly constituted civil and military authorities, at times, have recourse to the use of lethal force. This may be virtuous, as a last resort, to protect the innocent against the grave threat of an unjust aggressor, or it may also be an unjust and malicious usurpation of lethal power. In the complexities of our world the ethical permutations of justice and injustice here can be bewildering. With civil and military authorities there is a frequent temptation to use excessive force, often with consequences of unintended, collateral wounding or killing of the innocent. This danger is only compounded in the case of armed invasions, civil

wars, and insurrections. We also see, from the perspective of Catholic doctrine, a continuation of capital punishment in cases lacking moral warrant.

It is abundantly clear that the call to prayer and fasting for conversion here is on behalf of the entire human community. But, even should there be a vast conversion leading to an almost universal culture of life, the Church would be obliged to maintain for the remainder of time a vigilant prayer for life. We have seen our fallen human capacity for an unspeakably evil inhumanity toward our own kind. This fallenness exposes itself as the same murderous inclination of Cain (see Genesis 4). Sin against life is a demon lurking at our door, at times an overpowering lure. By the grace of God we can conquer it. But what a spiritual battle this is proving to be! History will allow us no respite from vigilance, nor will it be kind to indifferent or half measures. Cain sullenly asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Jesus answered with an unqualified, "Yes. Whatever you do or fail to do to one of these least ones, you do or fail to do to me."

Prayer, worship in Spirit and in truth, Eucharistic communion in the Lord Jesus Christ are ever the means to fight the good fight of our Faith. *Reverence for Life* asserts:

All initiatives on behalf of life — education, pastoral care, and civic involvement — must be initiated by and sustained with ongoing conversion which only God's grace in Word and Spirit can foster. Prayer is the means by which we as a people of and for life singly and together commune with God and in Christ become recipients and ministers of God's grace — ministers of the Gospel of life. How can we expect to have the heart for the long struggle for life unless new hearts are created within us? How can people for life promote a culture of life and the reign of God unless we kneel together before the One Source of all life? We are summoned to pray for life.

All manner of praying is encouraged by our bishops. The source and summit of our Christian lives is the worship and prayer of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord, given us to share in the Eucharistic liturgy. The bishops have directed that "Parishes should include in the petitions at every Mass a prayer that ours will become a nation that respects and protects all human life, born and unborn, reflecting a true culture of life (see USCCB, *Pastoral Plan*, §IV, and *A People of Life & for Life*, 2002)."

The bishops urge recourse to the Church's liturgies and diocesan and parish sponsored programs of prayer and fasting. The web site of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky offers a wide variety of pro-life prayer texts, services, and vigils for various occasions as a resource to aid the prayer of the Church. Special meditations for praying the Holy Rosary and for the Stations of the Cross are recommended and readily available as devotions and prayers for the cause of life. Many practice the prayers of *Spiritual Adoption*, promoted by Archbishop Fulton Sheen. The USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities annually sends dioceses prayer resources and educational/formational materials in preparation for October as *Respect Life* month. The Church also observes January 22nd, the anniversary of the infamous U.S. Supreme Court decisions, *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton*, as a national day of prayer and penance for offenses against life. "Only with prayer — prayer that storms the heavens for justice and mercy, prayer that cleanses our hearts and souls — will the culture of death that surrounds us today be replaced with a culture of life (*Pastoral Plan*)."

Rev. Richard Meredith is a member of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Pro-life Committee and pastor of St. Pius X Parish in the Diocese of Owensboro.

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Helping Youth Become Moral Adults

By Jim Mattingly

Change in today's world can be exciting, perplexing, stimulating and shocking – all at the same time. The children and youth of today are living in a world that is changing faster than any previous generation has experienced. They have no knowledge of a world without computers, internet, iPods, and electronic social networking. Within their young lifetimes, methods of information delivery and communication have changed in ways that would have been unrecognizable as recently as 10 years ago. And while our parents and grandparents successfully navigated decades with immense and constant changes, the pace of change continues to accelerate.

For the most part, today's children and youth navigate their changing technological world with confidence and efficiency. But as parents and educators are well aware, the world in which today's children and youth are growing up is loaded with temptations and challenges. Instant access to information is a valuable learning tool, but it also gives youngsters access to limitless sources of information, some of which may not be in their best interest. Although instant communication is a wonderful and useful luxury, it can also be turned into an instrument for harassment and bullying. The pop culture that surrounds us – while fun and entertaining – can also be a medium for teaching values that neither parents nor educators would condone.

Sometimes it can seem like the entire secular culture is trying to guide our children and youth in a negative direction, while Church, family, and school strive to guide them down the path of Gospel values. Society is forgetting the purpose of religion as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in Australia in 2009. He explained that “by reminding us of human finitude and weakness, religion also enjoins us not to place our ultimate hope in this



Jim Mattingly is the Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Owensboro. Other diocesan contributors to this article include Elaine Robertson, Director of Faith Formation; Melinda Prunty, Director of Youth Ministry, and Ben Warrell, Director of Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center.

Great Prayer for Life

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Only God, of course, knows the earnestness and extent of the Church's prayer for the cause of human life. In that many who claim Catholic affiliation still promote and participate in the very evils against life named above, it is clear that redoubled efforts and greater spiritual intensity are always needed. To protect life, the virtues which are the guardians of life and true love need also to be strengthened, namely, chastity, humility, gratitude, generosity, welcome, and the obedience of faith. Can there be any question that lust and mistaken notions of autonomy in sexual matters fuel much of the dissent in the Church against our doctrines on sexual and conjugal virtues? We pray as we actually believe (*lex orandi, lex credendi*). Increase of conversion even to pray is needed here in every heart. We also need to pray in this

passing world.” Our faith calls us to search for meaning beyond that which is always before us.

In the Diocese of Owensboro, there are four ministries – Catholic Schools, Faith Formation, Youth Ministry, and the Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center – whose primary focus is faith formation for children and youth. Ben Warrell, camp director of Gasper River acknowledges “All of these ministries fit hand in hand to help us develop the leaders in the young church of today.” The overall mission is the same: to support families in helping children and youth learn how to become ethical and moral adults in their personal and professional lives. As Fr. Tony Shonis says, “to give them a lens of human dignity through which to see the world.”

Children and youth know that in today's world change is constant and relentless. And today's adults know – all too well – that the temptations and challenges of modern culture are immense. The four ministries seek to help young people encounter Jesus Christ on a personal level, to internalize the concept of the *constancy of the teachings of the Catholic Church*, and to live their lives – whatever vocation they choose – centered on Gospel values. Warrell adds that “Camp has been an amazing experience for our young people. They are unplugged, away from the world and centered on a community focused on Jesus Christ. The camp combines fun activities, teaching of the Catholic Church and the Sacraments in a way that allows campers to experience God like they never have before. They leave as different people.”

As Pope Benedict XVI told the youth of the world in 2009, “Life is not governed by chance; it is not random. Your very existence has been willed by God, blessed and given a purpose! Life is not just a succession of events or experiences. It is a search for the true, the good and the beautiful. It is to this end that we make our choices; it is for this that we exercise our freedom; it is in this – in truth, in goodness, and in beauty – that we find happiness and joy.”

It is our hope and our prayer as Catholic educators that when the storm clouds gather, our young people will instinctively seek to stand on the rock of Catholic teaching to help them meet the challenges that most certainly lie ahead. With strong guidance and fervent prayer, they can turn those challenges into opportunities to lead a more faith-filled life

spiritual battle to be guarded from temptations to indifference, to a weary despair, or to raging violence facing the traumatic horrors, brutality, and extent of the killing. As St. Paul teaches in Ephesians 6:10-18, “our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.” Everyone who participates in the killing, or who supports it or approves it, are nonetheless our fellow human beings for whom Christ died and is raised. They are special objects of our prayer and fasting, so that the devil may be overthrown and they be redeemed. We should never surrender anyone as lost but commend them to Christ. Our prayer for life becomes also the law of our pastoral ministry, of our civil and political practice, and of the message of truth we proclaim and teach. In all things we pray: “O God, guard us with your joy and your peace, for in you life is victorious (*taken from a prayer for the closing of an abortion clinic*).”



Archdiocese of Louisville
PO BOX 1073
Louisville Kentucky 40201

502-875-4345
Fax: 502-875-2841
cckstaff@ccky.org
www.ccky.org

Kentucky League for
Educational Alternatives
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OFL Linked to Catholic Charities to Expand Services to Women

Continued from page 1

enting classes — to women experiencing crisis pregnancies. As part of this network, OFL hotline volunteers will now have immediate access to these resources for their callers in addition to other Charities services, such as English-as-a-Second-Language classes; emergency food, shelter, and medical assistance; and referrals to others service providers as a result of Catholic Charities' relationships with area agencies and resources.

- Opportunities for Life will expand its local presence through the establishment of regional offices in Catholic Charities' agencies located in Owensboro (to serve the Archdiocese of Louisville and the Diocese of Owensboro) and Lexington (to serve the Dioceses of Covington and Lexington). Two regional coordinators will staff these offices. This will allow the OFL coordinators, whose primary responsibility is to recruit and train hotline volunteers, to establish closer relationships with current volunteers and with local parishes for additional volunteer recruitment.
- Under this new structure, local diocesan advisory councils for OFL will be established in each of the four Kentucky dioceses. These local boards will expand the ownership of OFL activities in all areas of the state. They also will serve as resources for regional OFL Coordinators in learning about the local realities that impact the mission of OFL and as a help in efforts to recruit, support, deploy, and appreciate hotline volunteers.

Ruslyn Case Compton, director of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Lexington, sees these changes as exciting opportunities for renewed ministry among OFL volunteers and Catholic Charities staff. "It is my belief that the hotline volunteers will enjoy the technical support and encouragement

that an agency of social workers and counselors can provide. I envision offering volunteers more opportunities for training and networking as they become a part of the Catholic Charities community. In turn, I believe that the witness of the hotline volunteers will be an inspiration to Charities' staff. During this discernment process I have developed a great respect for the love and commitment that OFL volunteers bring to this ministry," she said.

Details about the transition are still being worked out, but according to Rita Heinz, director of Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Owensboro, "Our goal will be to make the transition as smooth as possible for our volunteers and those we serve."

Bishop Ronald Gainer of the Diocese of Lexington and Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of the Archdiocese of Louisville met with OFL advisory board members at an appreciation luncheon in June. As the Bishops explained the new model, they emphasized building upon the strengths of the past while providing new direction for the future. "We want to advance the impact of this life-affirming and life-giving ministry," said Bishop Gainer, "and I am pleased to be hosting one of the regional sites at our Catholic Charities office in the Diocese of Lexington."

"We can't do enough to support and thank the dedicated volunteers who have brought this ministry so far. In fact, we need to do more to promote Opportunities for Life in the broader Church community," said Archbishop Kurtz. "In addition to providing enhanced support for volunteers, I think the new structure will provide for expanded use of the Internet and additional marketing of this vital pro-life ministry."

The bishops hope to have the regional coordinators hired, the councils formed, and offices established by the fall of 2010. For more information about the Opportunities for Life ministry and volunteer opportunities, please go to www.opportunitiesforlife.org or call 502/223-5330.