

Catholics Influence KY Public Policy

‘Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me.’ (Mt: 25)

“The poor were always before Him. He died for the poor,” Louisville’s Archbishop Thomas Kelly, O.P. proclaimed during his homily at the Catholics @ the Capitol liturgy with Matthew 25 as the Gospel. Archbishop Kelly has chaired the Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK) Board of Directors from its inception, October 13, 1983. Joining him in 1983 were the two other Kentucky bishops, Bishop John McRaith of Owensboro and Bishop William Hughes of Covington. The Diocese of Lexington was not yet established. CCK is the public policy voice for the four dioceses of the Commonwealth and is a means for Catholics to speak for the poor who are before us today.

For 22 years, CCK has worked to implement the charge of Matthew 25 by offering practical ways for Catholics to influence legislators. Through its legislative advocacy network, CCK facilitates the advocacy of hundreds of Catholics with legislators in Frankfort and Washington D.C. For the past two years, CCK hosted Catholics @ the Capitol so participants could meet personally with their legislators in Frankfort on

Neither Liberal nor Conservative But Fully Compassionate

“It is time for both the left and the right to admit that they have run out of imagination, that the categories of liberal and conservative are dysfunctional, and that what is needed is a radicalism that leads beyond both right and left. That radicalism that can be found in the gospel which is neither liberal nor conservative but fully compassionate.”

— Jim Wallis

The U. S. Catholic Bishops’ *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, which summarizes Catholic teaching on public life and key moral issues, places the teaching of Matthew 25 at a high level when applied to the public policy issues. “Our faith reflects God’s special concern for the poor and vulnerable and calls us to make their needs our first priority in public life.” *Faithful Citizenship* sets out four Moral Priorities for Public Life:

- Protecting Human Life
- Promoting Family Life
- Pursuing Social Justice
- Practicing Global Solidarity.

issues that promote human life and human dignity, especially of the poor and vulnerable. This year Fr. Pat Stewart, Pastoral Director Miriam Picconi, and members of Frankfort’s Good Shepherd Parish warmly welcomed us to the Capitol city and facilitated the joyous mass.

By our service and action we must bring to the public square the Good News of helping the least among us. This was the chal-

lenge of John Carr, Secretary, U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Department of Social Development and World Peace, who delivered the keynote address at



John Carr and Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P.

Catholics @ the Capitol: *Faithful Citizenship: More Important Than Ever*. “In all that he says, the Pope speaks to both human life and human dignity,” Carr said. “We cannot divide the faith. We are in this together. This is not about Democrat or Republican or liberal or conservative. This is about whether the women who clean our offices, make our beds or cook our food can afford to take their children to the doctor. We believe they are members of our family and that we will be judged by how we take care of them.”

Carr noted that in the last election, though 45 million people had no health insurance, the least of these were missing in the debates. Also, we have a culture of violence, Carr said, solving our worst problems with violence, abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and, increasingly, war.

But there is much hope according to Carr. “This is a new moment. Our most difficult problems are moral. We have us, the most undeveloped resource, to advance our faith in the public square. We need to integrate ourselves for the long haul, engage others, and not isolate ourselves. We must anchor faithful citizenship in prayer and worship, building bridges between worship and justice.”

Besides Carr, two Catholic state Representatives, Jim Wayne (D) and Jimmy Higdon (R), spoke about how to influence legislators and especially urged listeners to be persistent in bringing issues to them.

Participants gave the event high praise, describing it as “inspirational,” “motivating,” a “prayerful experience,” and a “great opportunity to meet others interested in social justice issues.” Some also praised the use of the legislative alerts sent by CCK to Faithful Citizen Advocates. To sign up to receive these alerts visit www.cky.org/mlm/signup/ today.

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Focus on Dignity of the Person

By Ed Monahan
Executive Director

At the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Board meeting in December 2004, Kentucky's bishops adopted *A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice: A Kentucky Call to Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration*, asking that we reach out to crime victims, offenders, and communities to reform the criminal justice system with a focus on the dignity of the person.

Having visited three prisons in Kentucky, our four bishops are responding to the November 2000 U. S. Bishops statement on crime and criminal justice, *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*.

"The statement from Kentucky's bishops speaks clearly and directly," said Steve Bogus, Director of Louisville's Catholic Charities. "It provides us Catholics and our institutions with concrete objectives to increase fairness, rehabilitation, and compassion for victims and offenders—to seek a truly better sense of justice in our criminal justice system."

The Statement calls for greater education on teaching right from wrong, respect for life, and forgiveness and mercy. The bishops ask Diocesan social services agencies and parish outreach efforts to continue to provide and expand their efforts to provide counseling to victims of crime, ex-offender reintegration programs, charitable services to low-income people, and drug and alcohol recovery programs.

"The Diocese of Lexington is particularly challenged to minister to inmates and their families," said Ruslyn Case-Compton, Director of Lexington's Catholic Social Services Bureau. "There are 50 county jails, 5 state facilities, 6 federal facilities and 1 private facility located within our borders. Many parishes are reaching out to inmates and their families: already visiting facilities, celebrating Mass, providing support and encouragement to parolees. But, there are still many incarcerated individuals who would benefit from the presence of a friendly visitor; many families who need help with transportation and lodging so they may visit their incarcerated relatives; and many parolees, released with only the clothes on their backs, who need support to begin living new lives."

"Our agency has a partnership with Fay-

ette County parole officers to provide emergency funds to parolees," said Case-Compton. "We've helped with bus tokens, clothing and medications, as well as rent and utility payments. It is clear to us that inmates need support and material assistance in order to become productive members of society. It's naïve to think that upon release, an ex-con can just step right into a transformed life. Successful reintegration is not easy; programs are needed to help with the adjustment to a life without crime."

Are Kentucky's limited fiscal and human resources being used wisely and in a way that fully advance the responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration of people?

The public policy initiatives called for in the Statement are best understood in the context of Kentucky's resource hungry criminal justice complex. The average cost to lock up a prisoner in state prisons is \$17,194 per year. The yearly cost to supervise a person on probation or parole is \$1,256. If you add together persons under state and federal correctional control in Kentucky and the correctional staff, those 66,877 people cost \$491 million. By population, they are the equivalent of the 11th largest county in Kentucky, right behind Madison and Pike counties.

"With the expansion of the prison population, society is failing to meet its responsibilities to those who are broken and those who are in need of caring concern for their rehabilitation and healing," said Glenmary Father John S. Rausch, Director of Lexington's Justice and Peace Commission. "We seem to be spending lots of money locking up our problems instead of money dealing with them in smarter ways with Gospel values. Too often those suffering from addictions and mental disabilities are seen as judicial problems rather than as persons to be treated with resources that meet their needs within a community of care."

Are Kentucky's limited fiscal and human resources being used wisely and in a way that fully advances the responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration of people?



Ed Monahan
Executive Director
Catholic Conference of Kentucky

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Dignity of the Person

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The Statement answers the question by urging the state to increase alternatives to incarceration and make a policy decision to reallocate some of the \$334 million Kentucky spends *annually* on incarceration and spend it on treatment for those who have committed nonviolent drug crimes.

The Statement's other public policy initiatives include:

- Convene Catholic criminal justice professionals to discuss the application of the Statement to the criminal justice system.
- Eliminate Kentucky's use of private prisons and privatizing correctional services in state correctional facilities. The public trust should not be privatized.
- Provide for timely restoration of voting rights to offenders. Ex-offenders should be welcomed back into society as full participating members to the extent feasible.
- Provide that custodial interrogations are recorded in capital investigations.
- Eliminate killing by the state. Kentucky should abolish the death penalty, heeding the prophetic call of Pope John Paul II.

"Although the Diocese of Covington does not have any state or federal prisons within its boundaries, there are residents of the Diocese in prisons throughout the state," said Sr. Joan Boberg, CDP, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services of Northern Kentucky and CCK Social Concerns Committee member. "Our concern about the rehabilitation and restoration of these men and women is our responsibility, obligation and privilege. We provide drug counseling, an important ministry to those struggling with the scourge of drug and alcohol addiction."

The Statement calls for an increase in ministry to the incarcerated. Sister Dorothy Schuette, OSB, Pastoral Associate at Mother of God and CCK Pro-Life Committee member, has been involved in jail ministry for 14 years. She said, "I have found a good number to be in jail because they are just trying to survive. They have, for all kinds of reasons, no resources of property, family, education or upbringing that prepare them to function well in society. Unless there is adequate intervention for rehabilitation and reentry into our communities, they will continue to cycle in and out. In jail they are relatively safe and sober and I have found in that setting so many who have a beautiful,

big-hearted and simple spirit. It is a great loss for our society to be deprived of the good men and women that they could be within a humane system of incarceration and release."

Dick Murphy, Director of the Owensboro Diocese's Office of Social Concerns and CCK Social Concerns Committee member, reflected on the CCK Criminal Justice Statement, "If a person considers the reported fact that the odds of being a crime victim in general, in a given year, are about one in ten, according to the National Crime Victimization Survey for 2001. And, if a person considers that the current population of inmates at jails and prisons in the state of Kentucky is approximately 50,000 and that it is growing at the rate of 1% a month. Then the statement 'there, but for the grace of God, go I' seems remarkably accurate. Any of us could be, and many of us are, crime victims; could somehow become, or have been involved with a criminal act; or be, or actually are a member of the family of either one of these groups." Murphy said, "The Bishops of Kentucky and the United States are aware of these things and recognize the need for the best response our communities can give to the needs of these groups. They call on the good will of Kentucky's citizens to address these very real needs in our criminal justice system."

CCK supports Governor Ernie Fletcher's public policy decision, led by Lt. Governor Steve Pence, to see drug and alcohol offenses as primarily a public health issue, and not a criminal matter, and to provide offenders more treatment resources, knowing that this approach works.

CCK will work to increase alternatives to incarceration and will seek to have some of the hundreds of millions Kentucky now spends to imprison people shifted to provide an increase in treatment resources, especially for nonviolent drug offenses. The funding for Kentucky's Community Corrections Commission that successfully provides alternatives to incarceration should be increased substantially. CCK will urge lawmakers to budget more money for services for mentally ill prisoners to meet their special needs. CCK invites all Catholics to work to make the justice system more just.

A complete copy of the Statement is found at: www.ccky.org/Pastoral%20Resources/Ky%20RRR%20Initiative.pdf.

**Help
About
End-of-Life
Decisions
Available
For
Parishioners**



A national telephone survey of 1,000 adults conducted by FindLaw finds that only 33% of Americans have a living will.

The sixty-seven percent who do not have a living will have much less control over their medical fate when unable to speak for themselves.

With the passage in Kentucky of The Living Will Directive and Health Care Surrogate Designation of 1994, you have two options in Kentucky in preparing your Advance Health Care document.

Either decision can be accommodated in a single form created by the General Assembly. The Living Will Directive enables you to make your wishes known regarding life-prolonging treatment in advance of the time when you are no longer able to participate actively in decisions concerning your medical care.

The Health Care Surrogate Designation provides the same powers as does the Living Will Directive but, in addition, allows you to designate one or more persons to serve as "surrogate," such as a family member or close friend, to make health care decisions for you if you lose the ability to decide for yourself.

CCK has a Pastoral Letter, *Kentucky's Advance Health Care Directives: A Catholic Perspective*, that addresses these matters. It is found at: www.ccky.org.

We encourage you to read it and put an announcement for several weeks in your bulletin asking parishioners to make sure they have an Advance Directive so they make their health care decisions at a time when they are competent to do so.

Catholic Conference Pro-Life Committee

Covington

Robert Greene
Rev. Ronald Ketteler, Chair
Sr. Dorothy Schuette, O.S.B.

Lexington

Rev. John Moriarty
Rev. Mr. Jim Paris

Louisville

Helen Rothgerber
Rev. Tony Smith

Owensboro

Rev. Richard Meredith

The mission of the Pro-Life Committee is to advise the Bishops of Kentucky on matters pertaining to the dignity and preservation of human life in all its stages.

The Committee is charged with examining critical issues of the day and encouraging cooperation among all pro-life people.

The Committee develops plans and programs which will inspire the people of God to live and give visible witness to their faith within the Church and in the community.

The Committee assists in the development of a public policy effort that advocates for the protection of human life in all its stages.

2005 General Assembly Wrap-up

The Kentucky General Assembly completed its 2005 session on March 21. The Catholic Conference monitored nearly 50 active bills and resolutions during this year's short session. Legislators introduced 743 bills and 408 resolutions.

CCK organized its legislative priorities in relation to the four moral priorities for public life found in the United States bishops' document, *Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility: Protecting Human Life, Promoting Family Life, Pursuing Social Justice, and Practicing Global Solidarity.*

This article will review CCK legislative activity on bills of most importance to the Conference.

Protecting Human Life

HB 386 Rep. Keith Hall sponsored HB 386, which was co-sponsored by Reps. Adia Wuchner, Bob Damron, David Floyd, Mike Harmon, Mary Harper, Chuck Meade, Rick Nelson, Tom Riner, and Tommy Thompson.

HB 386 protects embryonic human life by forbidding research that would destroy human life at its earliest stage. CCK worked with Kentucky Right to Life on this measure. The hope was that House leadership would send this bill to a friendly committee where it would receive a hearing and a vote. Instead, it was sent to the House Judiciary committee where it died.

HB 376 Rep. Jim Wayne sponsored HB 376, which was co-sponsored by Reps. David Floyd, Mike Harmon, Jimmy Higdon, Stan Lee, and Darryl Owens.

HB 376 would allow a donor of money to be used for adult stem cell research to receive a tax credit. The United States Bishops are urging greater attention be paid to this promising field of research because it produces results and leads to the discovery of effective treatments of disease. In addition, since embryonic human life is not involved, this method of research meets the moral criteria demanded by respect for human life and dignity. Unfortunately, this bill languished in the House Appropriations and Revenue Committee and died.

HB 242 Rep. Robin Webb sponsored HB 242, which was co-sponsored by Reps. Lonnie Napier, Sheldon Baugh, Dwight Butler, Perry Clark, Derrick Graham, Charlie Hoffman, Dennis Horlander, Mary Lou Mar-

zian, Reggie Meeks, Darryl Owens, Ancel Smith, Kathy Stein, John Vincent, and Jim Wayne.

HB 242 required that all criminal homicide interrogations be recorded. The purpose of this legislation is to protect innocent human life, increase the chances of punishing the truly guilty, and instilling credibility in our criminal justice system. Studies indicate that electronic recording of interrogations benefit everyone in the justice system. The bill received a hearing in the House Judiciary Committee and was amended to limit the recording of interrogations to death penalty cases. The Committee recommended passage of this legislation. However, it was late in the session and the bill never received a vote on the House floor.

Promoting Family Life

SB 188 Senator Julian Carroll sponsored SB 188 and Representative Mike Cherry **HB 405** sponsored HB 405. Co-sponsors of SB 188 included Senators David Boswell, Walter Blevins Jr, Tom Buford, Denise Harper-Angel, Dan Mongiardo, Jerry Rhoads, Ernesto Scorsone, and Tim Shaughnessy. Co-sponsors of HB 405 included Reps. Perry Clark, Jon Draud, C. B. Embry Jr, David Floyd, Mary Harper, Melvin Henley, Jimmy Higdon, Paul Marcotte, Mary Lou Marzian, Ruth Ann Palumbo, Marie Rader, Charles Siler, Kathy Stein, Jim Wayne, and Brent Yonts.

These two bills were identical. Both require school districts to have procedures in place to address student harassment, intimidation, and bullying. In addition to other provisions, they also require school districts to formulate a code of acceptable behavior prohibiting student harassment, intimidation, or bullying that includes procedures for reporting and investigating complaints, a strategy for protecting complainants from retaliation, and a process for annually discussing the code with students.

CCK led an effort to organize an Anti-Bullying Alliance: Keeping Kentucky's Kids Safe. The Alliance included the following organizations: ACLU of Kentucky, Jefferson County Teachers Association, Kentucky Conference for Community and Justice, Kentucky Center for School Safety, Kentucky Council of Churches, Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Domestic Violence

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Association, Kentucky Education Association, Kentucky Mental Health Association, Kentucky Mental Health Coalition, Kentucky Psychiatric Medical Association, Kentucky Psychological Association, Kentucky School Boards Association, Kentucky Youth Advocates, and the National Association of Social Workers—Kentucky Chapter.

The House Education Committee recommended passage of HB 405 and the House did vote it off the floor and sent it to the Senate. Though there was still enough time to hold a hearing on the bill in the Senate Education Committee, no hearing was held and the Senate leadership allowed this important legislation to die in committee.

Pursuing Social Justice

Two issues that hung over the 2005 session and colored most activity were the budget and changes to the tax system. Legislators were under court order to pass a budget during this session.

Complicating matters was the law that during these 30-day sessions all revenue related bills must pass by a super majority vote in each chamber, a minimum of 23 votes in the Senate and 60 in the House.

This meant more compromises with more legislators had to be made to achieve the necessary majority, reducing the chances of enacting meaningful tax reform bills.

CCK worked to have both budget and tax measures recognize that moral issues were involved and that more revenue was needed to meet the current needs of Kentucky's poor and vulnerable.

The budget does provide for much new money for Medicaid, but not enough considering the needs. For example, future shortfalls risk benefit and eligibility reductions and today 118,000 children in Kentucky have no health care.

The tax changes are remarkable in taking over 500,000 low earners off the income tax rolls and closing corporate loopholes, but they fall short by reducing corporate and individual rates for those earning higher incomes in light of revenue needs for the least among us.

It may run counter to American capitalism but, as Christians, we know that tax policy ought to be determined by one's ability to pay. Our contribution to the common good

should reflect our blessings. "Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more." (Lk 12: 48).

CCK is most concerned about the catastrophic harm headed our way because the tax changes are revenue neutral over the next 5 years and do not address the dramatic funding shortfalls that will reach \$2+ billion by 2010 compounded by a heavy debt load of \$2 billion added this session.

A tsunami's coming to Kentucky; we are aware of it, yet we did not take actions in this 2005 session to avoid its devastation.

Legislators introduced several bills to expand gambling in the Kentucky and CCK joined with other organizations in the coalition known as Citizens Against Gambling Expansion. None of this legislation moved in committee and these bills did not advance.

HB 5 CCK supported HB 5 sponsored by Rep. Rob Wilkey. Co-sponsors included Reps. Jessie Crenshaw, Robin Webb, and Susan Westrom. This measure would have allowed certain persons who had committed one felony that was non-violent to have the record of that conviction expunged after 10 years of crime free living in the community. HB 5 passed the House, but languished in the Senate and died.

HB 205 CCK worked to pass HB 205 sponsored by Rep. Jim Wayne. Reps. Steve Riggs and Perry Clark co-sponsored. This bill would have protected owners of a manufactured home from eviction from the land upon which the home sits without good cause. Kentucky law does not now require the land owner to have a good reason to evict homeowners. The bill had broad support, but died in the House after recommendation for passage by the members of the House Local Government Committee.

Throughout the session, CCK sent action alerts to the nearly 800 persons signed up as Faithful Citizen Advocates. Responses to these alerts did not go unnoticed. Many legislators told us about receiving constituents' messages about the bills discussed above.

Please list the link below in your week-end bulletins and let parishioners know how needed their voices are and how they can become Faithful Citizen Advocates by visiting www.ccky.org/mlm/signup/.

Catholic Conference Social Concerns Committee

Covington

Sr. Joan Boberg, CDP
Sr. Ruth Kettman, CSJ

Lexington

Ruslyn Case-Compton
Mary Alice Pratt
Rev. John Rausch

Louisville

Steve Bogus, Chair
Mark Bouchard
David Dutschke
Sr. Mary Schmuck, RSM

Owensboro

Richard Murphy
Veronica Wilhite

Brochures on Economic Justice Not Ready

In our last issue an announcement about a series of brochures on Catholic social teaching and economic justice indicated that they were nearing completion and would be ready for distribution by the end of March. Due to some copyright issues and the work required with the General Assembly in session, the brochures are not ready to take to the printer. We do anticipate completion and distribution will be possible by mid-Summer.

Focusing on seven principles found in Catholic social teaching, the brochures are Kentucky specific and meant for use in parishes and other Catholic adult educational settings. CCK will also make them available on the website in Adobe PDF format.

Catholic Conference Ecumenical Committee

Covington

Rev. Ronald Ketteler

Lexington

Rev. Mr. Mark Stauffer

Louisville

Rev. William Hammer

Owensboro

Rev. Tony Bickett
Rev. Michael Clark

Enlightened by faith and guided by love, the CCK Ecumenical Committee seeks to:

- ◆ involve the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike, in promotion of spiritual ecumenism working toward unity among Catholics and among Christians;
- ◆ work with the Kentucky Council of Churches to increase ecumenical dialogue among leaders and members of the various churches and ecclesial communities;
- ◆ promote study leading to doctrinal understanding;
- ◆ and serve as instruments through which common action can be taken on matters related to social services and the formation of public policy.

From the Desk of Fr. William Hammer

The Sacrament of Baptism in an Ecumenical Context

In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul is writing to offer encouragement to Roman Christians to hold fast to their faith. Regarding their baptism, he asks rhetorically whether they remember, "we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Through baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4).

All Christians are incorporated into a life in Christ and into his Church through Baptism. Baptism creates a bond of unity between all Christians and Christ and among all Christians in Christ.

The 2003 revised *Ecumenical Handbook for the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Kentucky* offers our bishops' affirmation and encouragement to Catholics to build upon our shared foundation in the Christian faith: the waters of baptism. To give visible expression to the shared experience of being "baptized into Christ Jesus," there should be ceremonies and prayer services where Christians come together to renew their baptismal promises.

The 1993 *Directory for the Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, (DAPNE) states that the Catholic Church recognizes as valid all baptisms "conferred with water and with a formula which clearly indicates that baptism is done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." (DAPNE n.93, see also Canon 849). The last 40 years of dialogue among members of the various Christian churches has produced much progress and theological agreement in understanding the significance, importance, and effects of baptism. One example is the 1982 ground breaking document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, published by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches. Vatican representatives also participated in its preparation.

Given our Catholic understanding of the nature of baptism and the permanence of the relationship created by being baptized into Christ Jesus, the Catholic Church never "re-baptizes" another validly baptized Christian seeking membership in the Catholic Church. Acceptance of a baptized candidate for full communion into the Catholic Church requires only a profession of faith preceded by the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist.

The Kentucky *Ecumenical Handbook* also offers guidance to parents who are in ecumenical or interchurch marriages and who are preparing for their child's baptism. While there can be only one minister of Baptism, and that minister should be of the denomination into which

the child will be baptized, the *Handbook* notes that "a minister of another Church or ecclesial Community (may) take part in the celebration" (n. 80). Thus ministers from both churches may share in the baptismal celebration of the child's "new life" in Christ. Another possibility for mutual recognition of the baptism would be for the child and parents to be recognized or welcomed by the faith community of the other Christian parent as an affirmation of the baptism on a subsequent Sunday.

Another question that arises for parents at the time of the baptism of their child concerns the choice of godparents or witness. Drawing from DAPNE, the *Ecumenical Handbook* explains that there is a distinction between a godparent/sponsor and a witness. Godparents should be members of the Christian church into which the child will be baptized. This is so because they commit themselves to supporting parents in their duty of being good Christian parents and they represent the community of faith into which the child is being baptized (n. 81). Thus there must be at least one Catholic godparent at a baptism administered in the Catholic Church and other Christians may participate as witnesses. In recognition of the promise made by the witness to support the parents in the Christian faith development of the newly baptized child, "The names of such witnesses should be entered as such into the baptismal register" (n. 81). Conversely, "Catholics may act as witnesses at baptisms in other Churches or ecclesial communities" (n. 81).

The mutual recognition of baptism by most Christian churches offers a profound witness to the basic bond of unity that all the baptized share. Though our interchurch communion is still imperfect, Catholics are neither isolated from nor an independent organization from all other Christians. Though denominational differences are still significant in some matters and we live out our faith in a particular community, we must acknowledge that baptism by a particular church is simultaneously baptism into the universal Church. All Christians are called to nurture the faith and life of all our brothers and sisters in Christ and thereby live out an essential component of our ecumenical vocation.

For more information on baptism and other ecumenical matters in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, the *Ecumenical Handbook for the Dioceses of Kentucky* is available for downloading from the site of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky (www.ccky.org). You can also contact your own diocesan Ecumenical Officer and ask for a copy.

Parents' Voices Heard; Legislators Approve \$450,000 Increase in Funds

Harry Borders
Executive
Director
KLEA



This article will focus on the Kentucky General Assembly and our efforts to gain busing dollars in the session just ended for 2005. Our claim to fame, and first major victory, was a bus subsidy program enacted in 1994 that is used to transport our students to and from school using public school buses.

This first appropriation was for \$2 million and sixteen (16) counties applied for a percentage of those funds to be reimbursed for transporting Catholic school students within their boundaries. Over time we have added six (6) counties to that list and wish it were more, but the limiting factor is the amount of the appropriation of general fund dollars for this important safety program for our students.

Here is a brief explanation of how the program works and why. Each county that participates contracts with the Board of Education, which then buses our students for the school year. These public school officials invoice Fiscal Court for the amount due: the cost per pupil times the number of days bused. Fiscal Court then applies to the State Transportation Cabinet for reimbursement. By law, the Transportation Cabinet is the holder of the funds and administers the program.

Both the Kentucky and United States supreme courts ruled long ago that using state funds to bus private school students is a safety issue only. There is no violation of the First Amendment. However, Kentucky's constitution contains language known as the "Blaine Amendment" which prohibits giving education funds to private schools. Therefore, we must use state general funds. The Blaine Amendment was placed in our constitution due to anti-Catholic bias and deserves to be a future subject for this column.

With the additional counties on board, and an increasing number of passengers from the participating schools, the \$2 million annual appropriation soon proved inadequate for our needs. In the second year of the program Jefferson County participated after sitting out because of a lawsuit against

Fiscal Court. As you can imagine, Jefferson County contains more Catholic schools by far than any other county. At that time, we lobbied for additional funds to keep pace with need. Jefferson is unique in our discussion for two reasons. The large number of Catholic schools proved to be a deterrent to using public school buses, so private carriers transport our students. Secondly, Fiscal Court consistently budgeted fewer funds than needed, so our parents in Jefferson County must pay the difference out of pocket as the carriers cannot absorb the loss.

We successfully lobbied for, and received, increases on a regular basis. In a perfect world, there would be sufficient funds every year. Our hard fought victories were muted by a downturn in the economy starting in 2000 and this situation continues to this day.

From 2000 until the present, this bus subsidy remained stagnant. Neither the Administration nor the General Assembly approved our requested increase in funding.

This year we should have had \$3.5 million dollars, which is adequate, but we were stalled at \$2.5 million dollars, an amount equal to that which we received in 1999.

But, with the economy on the upswing and with a large parent e-mail database, we contacted legislators in great numbers and insisted on an increase in funding to restore the busing program to the Legislature's original intent; a safe ride to and from school for our students. We asked for an \$800,000 increase but had to settle for \$450,000 as time ran out for this session. The amount finally approved totaled \$2.95 million annually.

This is the only benefit that Kentucky's Catholic parents receive for all of the taxes they pay into Frankfort, and only half of our schools receive that benefit. The County Judges and Fiscal Courts have been most kind to us and continue to fund our busing even though they received only 80 cents on the dollar last year.

The KLEA Advisory Board and thousands of parents will continue to seek fair treatment when the Legislature convenes next January. Our thanks for everyone's support.

Catholic Conference Education Committee

Covington

Dr. Lawrence Bowman
Eugene Kuehne

Lexington

Patrick Guentert
Sr. Bernadette McManigal, BVM

Louisville

Rev. Joseph Atcher, O. Carm.
Chairperson
Dr. Sue Grenough
Leisa Speer

Owensboro

Patricia Blair
James Mattingly

The Education Committee of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky is a statewide advisory committee to the Kentucky Roman Catholic Bishops which

- ◆ Identifies educational issues of importance relating to Catholic schools, public schools and lifelong religious formation;
- ◆ Plans and networks the direction of Catholic education in Kentucky;
- ◆ Serves as a resource to the CCK Executive Director on the legislative and legal issues affecting all education in Kentucky.

U. S. Supreme Court Deals Death Blow to Juvenile Death Penalty**New Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty**

"I renew the appeal for a consensus to end the death penalty," Pope John Paul II proclaimed on January 27, 1999 in St. Louis, Missouri.

On March 21, 2005, the Monday of Holy Week, as Christians marked the execution of Jesus Christ, the United States Catholic Bishops launched a major "Catholic Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty" that continues to advance the Pope's call for the end of executions.

For 25 years, the U.S. Bishops' Conference has been working to curtail or end the use of capital punishment in the United States. Groundbreaking results of two recent Zogby polls of Catholics indicate sharply diminished support for the use of the death penalty. Catholic support for the use of the death penalty has dropped dramatically – below 50%.

The Zogby polls also revealed that:

- The more often Catholics attend Mass, the less likely they are to support the use of the death penalty.
- The younger Catholics are, the less likely they are to support the death penalty.
- A third of Catholics who once supported the use of the death penalty now oppose it.

The major reasons Catholics gave for opposing the use of the death penalty was "respect for life." Also, two of three (63%) Catholics are deeply concerned about what the use of the death penalty "does to us as a people and a country," according to the surveys.

"It is also significant," said Associate Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Fr. Pat Delahanty, "that the new polling indicates a majority of Catholics credit Church teaching as the number one factor influencing their position on the death penalty."

This change in Catholic attitudes tracks with a significant shift that has occurred in Kentucky over the last 15 years as demonstrated by the 2001 *Attitudes Toward the Death Pen-*

alty in Kentucky: A Comparison of Survey Results-1989, 1997, 1999 published in *Kentucky Justice and Safety Research Bulletin*. Today, the majority of Kentuckians prefer a sentence of life without parole to a sentence of death."

Kentucky's bishops have called for the elimination of death as a punishment in Kentucky. In their pastoral letter *Choose Life: Reflections on the Death Penalty*, issued in 1984 and reissued in 1996, the bishops said, "We are thus compelled to again spread the Church's continued teaching of opposition to the death penalty.... We have been inspired by the example and teachings of the Holy Father Pope John Paul II's call to reject our growing culture of death in his 1995 Papal Encyclical, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*."

"We bishops of Kentucky," Louisville's Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P. said, "have worked to promote a Culture of Life by eliminating abortion, prohibiting the destruction or use of human embryos, and by ending the use of the death penalty. We welcome this Campaign that will continue to call all Catholics to be, as our Holy Father challenges, 'unconditionally pro-life.' We invite Catholics and people of good will in our Commonwealth to work to promote a Culture of Life."

Just 20 days prior to the announcement of this new campaign, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky welcomed the decision of the United States Supreme Court declaring that it is unconstitutional to use the death penalty for those convicted of capital crimes committed before the age of 18. CCK had always urged the Kentucky legislature to pass bills forbidding the execution of juveniles. On March 1, Senator Gerald Neal and Representative Robin Webb, long time opponents of executing children, withdrew the bills each had introduced for the 2005 session since their passage was no longer needed.

The Conference's Pro-Life and Social Concerns Committees will be working to implement the Campaign in Kentucky. For more information readers should visit www.ccedp.org and www.ccky.org.

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