

“...totally aware of our dependence on YOU”



The Fancy Farm Picnic sponsored by St. Jerome Catholic Parish draws visitors from all over Kentucky, not only for the excellent food and the chance to reunite with family and friends, but also to listen to candidates from all political parties hoping to lead Kentuckians into the future.

The Catholic Conference of Kentucky staffs a booth each year to remind these future leaders of the presence of the Catholic voice in public policy.

Each year Bishop John McRaith offers a prayer before the political speeches that reminds everyone of the importance of God in our lives. Here is the text of his 2007 prayer.

Welcome to all of you—thanks for coming to the great Fancy Farm Picnic. This is always a big event, not only for our Diocese but for the Commonwealth of Kentucky as well.

Let us pause for a moment to call God's blessings upon this wonderful gathering.

Dear God, we stand in your presence with hearts full of gratitude that we live in a nation where we are free to gather in your name. Together, we praise and give you glory. We are grateful to live in a nation filled with people dedicated to the ideal of liberty and justice for all. As a nation, we must do our best to bring liberty and justice to the entire world. We do that by starting at home. Dear Lord God, we all know that only by doing YOUR will, in our lives individually and as a nation, will we be successful in achieving the rights you have given to all people.

We pray for peace in the world and especially for an end to the war in Iraq. We pray for the safety of all those who live in war torn areas. We thank and ask God's blessings on the safety of those who put their lives in harm's way daily, in Iraq and Afghanistan and all areas of conflict. We pray for their families. And we pray in a special way for all those who have lost their lives in service to our great country.

We pray for the development of an immigration system that will bring justice and liberty to all immigrants—realizing that most all of us are here because our foremothers and forefathers were willing to immigrate to the United States so they could raise their families in a country that holds itself to the national goal of liberty and justice for ALL.

We stand here today totally aware of our dependence

on YOU, Dear Lord, and on your *great love* for ALL. You have created us, given us the gift of life from the moment of conception to that day when YOU call us home to give a final accounting of our stewardship of the many gifts we have each been given.

We thank you for the freedom that you have given us in this nation, particularly the freedom to gather here today. We work toward the day when all people of the world might enjoy the gift of being free to do your will at all times.

We thank the people of St. Jerome Parish who work tirelessly year after year to make this gathering possible and for their gracious hospitality shown to us all.

We thank all those who have been called to be public servants—a good number of them are on the stage today. We thank them for being willing to use their talents and time to care for all your creation to the best of their abilities. We ask you to bless them as they go about this awesome task to make this a better world for all people—a world that will stand firm for liberty and justice for all. We promise them our prayers as we ask that you bless them with the grace to make every decision that they are called upon to make. We thank these public servants for all they do to make our Commonwealth great, and ask your blessings, God, on all the people who give so generously to make this world a place where we all can love one another as you love us.

May God be with us as we learn what the speakers have to say. May we show our gratitude to you by listening respectfully to their messages.

Again, thank all of you for being here today. We ask God's blessings on us all. We make this prayer in God's name. Amen.

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“We Are All Really Responsible For All.”

Bishops Adopt Two Statements; Offer Guidance to Catholics about Political Activity and HPV Vaccine

By Ed Monahan
Executive Director



At their August Board meeting, the Bishops of Kentucky approved two communications for Catholics. One statement is on the issue of political activity, and the other on the HPV vaccine.

Political Activity

In August 2006 and in April 2007 the Kentucky Bishops communicated with Catholic church, education and Catholic Charities leaders encouraging active participation in the public square and emphasizing their longstanding policy prohibiting partisan political activity by churches and individuals representing our church acting in their official capacities. They stated, “only voting guide materials published directly by United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (e.g., Faithful Citizenship) or by the Catholic Conference of Kentucky may be distributed in parishes.”

The Bishops write again to express appreciation for the “faithful implementation of the CCK Policy on Political Activity,” and the “faithful encouragement of civic involvement.” The Bishops communicate again on this topic because “the general election in Kentucky approaches and because the Office of General Counsel of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has issued a revised 2007 Political Activity Guidelines for Catholic Organizations. These guidelines provide commonsense explanation of the rules and provide practical examples.” The Bishops ask that church leaders “review the guidelines and educate [their] parish leaders on them.”

Links to the full text of both the USCCB revised guidelines and Kentucky Bishops’ policies on political activity are available on the home page of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky’s web page at www.ccky.org in the right hand column.

HPV Vaccination and Parental Responsibility

The full text of the Bishops’ position is below and also available on the website’s Public Witness page.

§1.0 Immunization of young females with the HPV [human papilloma virus] vaccine as a protection against cervical cancer poses no inherent moral objection. Rather, from a Catholic perspective, the HPV vaccine can be viewed as a responsible and acceptable measure for preventing cervical cancer.

§2.0 Consonant with parental and guardian obligations toward good medical decisions concerning minor children, parents and legal guardians enjoy the right to assess the necessity and appropriateness of HPV for their daughters. This right should be exercised after seeking competent medical advice. This right must be respected by statute.

§2.1 Parents are primary educators and care-givers for their children. As such they are obliged to instruct their children and to model for their charges responsible civic and moral behavior. Since HPV does not in itself promote sexual immorality or permissiveness; and, since the HPV vaccine is not a panacea for preventing all strains of HPV infection, parental responsibility for the moral and spiritual formation of their children in the virtue of chastity is indispensable. Chastity before marriage and fidelity within marriage serves as the best defense against such infections.

§3.0 HPV is categorized as a behaviorally transmitted communicable disease and not a contagious disease. As such, advocacy for a public policy to mandate universal schoolbased vaccinations is not supported as appropriate by the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.

§4.0 The ability to pay for the HPV vaccine should not be the determining factor for such immunization. Access to the vaccine should be made available for those children who are uninsured or are without means to pay for the immunizations.”

Catholic Health Care in Transition

By
John Gallagher, PhD



Dr. John Gallagher

An array of challenges confronts the American Catholic health care ministry. How competitive should a faith based ministry be in an environment in which competition is vital to economic survival? How does a Catholic health care ministry incorporate value free medical science into the healing ministry of Jesus? What are the moral obligations of this ministry to the poor, the underserved and migrants? In addition to these issues which are perhaps unique to the Catholic health care ministry, every clinical and financial issue that besets the American health care delivery system is also an issue for Catholic health care providers. A short reflective essay cannot deal with all these complex questions, but rather must content itself to focus on one, perhaps the central, issue, what does it mean to be a "Catholic" health care organization, to be an institutional ministry of the Catholic Church, to be a continuation of the healing ministry of Jesus?

Forty or fifty years ago it was easy to characterize what made a health care organization "Catholic." Such an organization was owned, governed, operated, managed and, to a significant degree, staffed by women religious. Congregations of women religious ran hospitals as integral elements of their congregational ministry. As canonically approved religious institutes, such congregations were recognized by the Church as conducting their ministries in the name of the Church. It is also important to note that these were explicitly congregational ministries, not just the apostolic good works of individuals. The "Catholic identity" of a hospital was a product of a congregational ministry.

The formation program of religious congregations acculturated each generation of women religious to its way of life, spirituality and ministry. The convents located in or immediately adjacent to the hospital were environments in which women who worked together also prayed together, shared meals, and retold the stories of how the hospital was founded, its struggles for survival and the achievements of great leaders. The culture of the convent and congregation was instilled into the culture of the hospital so that it was truly appropriate to refer to a hospital as a Mercy hospital, a Franciscan hospital, a Sisters of Charity hospital. This was the culture into which physicians and associates were assimilated.

All of this began to change rapidly in the late 1960s and 70s. The precipitous decline in the number of American religious women was a major catalyst of this change. Increasingly congregations of women religious no longer had the capacity to replace a retiring religious with a younger one. A growing percentage of the staff was drawn from the laity and other professionally qualified candidates. The decline in the number of women religious, however, was not the only reason for the significant changes that were to occur within Catholic health care.

At the same time, Catholic hospitals began to legally incorporate. They did so because in this same time frame American medical practice was going through its own transition that required hospitals, Catholic and secular, to amass capital for investments in contemporary medical technology. What had been relatively small hospitals were in the process toward becoming medical centers. Governmental regulation – recall that this was the same period in which Medicare and Medicaid were created – as well as hospital accreditation became important external standards to which the Catholic hospital needed to conform. These new medical centers were financially,

clinically and organizationally much more complex organizations than Catholic hospitals prior to this period. The cultural heritage of the religious congregations became increasingly challenged by cultures driven by clinical excellence, professionalism, and financial responsibility.

There is a temptation to hunger for the early days of Catholic health care, where the religious congregations managed their ministry so well. But that is a temptation to an empty future. When one of us is sick today what we want is not the hospital of the 1930s or 40s, but the medical center of today, with its clinical excellence, high technology and professionalism. The challenge for contemporary Catholic health care is how to mediate the tradition, the heritage of the Catholic health care ministry bequeathed largely to the Catholic laity into the contemporary medical center.

The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services is a document first promulgated by the American bishops in 1971 and most recently updated in 2001. This document contains 71 directives that provide important guidelines for the Catholic health care ministry. Much too frequently *The Directives* are discussed in negative terms and excessive emphasis is placed on services that Catholic health care organizations do not provide: direct sterilizations, direct abortions, active euthanasia. However, the vast majority of the directives require Catholic hospitals to undertake positive activities consistent with its role as a ministry of the Church, e.g. care of the poor, service to the community and to witness to the healing ministry of Jesus.

As important as *The Directives* are to the Catholic health care ministry, they point to the central challenge of the contemporary ministry rather than resolve the challenge. To meet this challenge at least two things need to occur. First, the laity and other associates in Catholic health care tend to think of themselves as having careers. One is a physician, another a nurse, yet a third is a member of senior management. How can participants in the Catholic health care ministry come to think of themselves as having a vocation? Indeed this ministry, and perhaps many others within the contemporary Church, will survive only if its leaders and associates perceive themselves as being called to service within the Church. The vocation to the health care ministry is different than that of religious women; it does not entail a commitment to three vows and a communal way of life. But it does require a profound acknowledgement that clinical or professional skills are exercised in a ministry of the Church. And, indeed, the leadership of the Church, the bishops, need to formally recognize and honor the vocations of the women and men charged to conduct this ministry in the name of the Church.

Second, the ministry needs to find more effective means to ensure that the culture of Catholic health care authentically mediates the healing mission of Jesus. The ministry needs cultures built around the healing mission of Jesus as their primary goal and purpose. The delivery of complex medical services is instrumental to the mission, but not its primary purpose. Such a commitment is not to diminish in any way the need for clinical excellence, indeed, only clinical excellence can truly give witness to such a lofty goal. But it does mean that the clinical excellence of the Catholic health care ministry can never forget the physical, psychological and spiritual vulnerability of those who seek succor within its services.

Dr. Gallagher is Corporate Director, Ethics for Catholic Healthcare Partners (CHP). As a member of the Department of Mission and Values Integration he shares responsibility for the development and implementation of system-wide strategies for integrating the mission and values into all aspects of the organizations, including its policies, practices and culture. He provides on-going research that assists the leadership of CHP in identifying emerging issues in moral theology, ethics and social justice as they impact the health care ministry and CHP and recommends appropriate responses.

Poverty in Kentucky: *A Threat to Our Common Good*



William R. Jones

By
William R. Jones

Bound together by their faith in the risen Christ, a small group of people formed a community of believers almost two thousand years ago. There was no one destitute among them, as all pooled their resources and distributed them according to needs. Living by their faith,

they comforted one another in their sorrow, tended those who were sick, clothed the naked and gave shelter to the homeless and the stranger. (Acts 2:44-46) Though they didn't always get along perfectly, their embrace of the mission of their Lord held them together and sustained them. This was the beginning of the Church and it is this faith and this mission that has been handed down to us.

Unfortunately, as our culture has become more complex and more individualistic, and as the scope of poverty in our Commonwealth and in our nation has grown, the sense of community and covenant experienced by early Christians has been fractured. The dimensions of poverty in the United States are daunting with thirty-seven million people falling below the official poverty line. Since 2000, the number of people who are poor in our nation has risen by 6 million. Those who are defined as severely poor, people with incomes under one-half the poverty line, number 15.6 million.

Even while the economy as a whole prospers, poverty is rampant, and the harm it inflicts on the soul of our nation and its people continues to grow. Such material want amidst such enormous wealth is a moral rip in the fabric of our society. In July of 2006 the United States Census Bureau reported an increase in the gap between wealthy and poor Americans. The top 20% of our population holds 83 % of the assets of

our economy, while the bottom 80% holds only 17%. This is the most extreme inequality since the speculative boom of the 1920s.

In Kentucky, one in six (17%) residents lives below the federal poverty level, compared with one in eight (12.5%) nationally. The state's median household income is about 20 percent below the national average. And more Kentucky households have fallen into lower income categories, with 38% earning less than \$25,000 a year, compared with 29% nationally; and more than half earning less than \$35,000, compared with 41% nationally.

Not only is Kentucky one of the nation's poorest states, but also is it plagued by *rural* poverty which isolates its victims from systems of care. In rural counties, people are less likely to have jobs or health insurance and more likely to live with severe doctor shortages and transportation problems. And they die at higher rates. Harvard University statistics from 2001 say that in Harlan County, for example, the life expectancy for men is 66 years of age. This is a shorter life span than that of men living in developing countries like Turkey, Ecuador and Colombia. Of the 20 counties with the highest overall death rates in Kentucky, 17 are rural and designated as "persistently poor," meaning that at least 20% of their people have lived in poverty for 30 years. Kentucky's Appalachian region has the lowest percentages of men and women in the labor force of any state's Appalachian region. By some accounts, 66% of males in Appalachian Kentucky over the age of 18 have, in despair, permanently left the workforce. The region also has the lowest percentages of high school and college graduates and the highest percentage of poverty. (Population Reference Bureau, Washington, D.C., 2003.)

Kentucky continues to rank among the 10 states with the highest percentage of *children* living in poverty. Twenty-two percent (22%) of children, our most vulnerable citizens, lived in poverty in the years between 2000 and 2005 and our state ranks: 44th in the percentage of children living in homes where neither parent has full time employment; 45th in the percentage of teens who are neither in school nor working; and, as the 40th worst state in the overall "well-being" of children. (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007 *Kids Count Data Book*.)

The fact that the current economy is leaving so many behind is a sign that something in our social and economic sys-

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tem is broken. Poverty in America, and particularly in Kentucky, is a problem which we as a society have inadvertently created by making economic, social and political choices that marginalize low income persons while doing little to get at the heart of the problem.

What are we to do in the face of this mind-numbing scandal? First, we must be cognizant of and continue to support the successful efforts of government in providing a set of basic structures that work effectively to reduce poverty and provide economic opportunity. The poverty rate in America would be nearly doubled were it not for successful government efforts such as Social Security, Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Medicare, Medicaid and federal, state and local housing assistance. The increase in the minimum wage, civil rights protections and labor laws are other examples of long term public policy successes on behalf of those who are poor.



Children, our most vulnerable citizens, do not fare well in Kentucky with 22% of them living in poverty in the years between 2000 and 2005.

Kentucky is the 40th worst state in the overall “well-being” of children.

Despite these successful programs, there are serious weaknesses in our economic and social policies at the local, state and federal level that make poverty rates much higher than they should be. Compared to other western industrialized nations, the United States has one of the highest poverty rates and one of the lowest spending rates in terms of programs aimed at reducing poverty.

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the large structural issues which contribute to the grinding problem of poverty. While we might wish for revolutionary changes in public policy, we know the issues are complex and of long standing. Therefore, changes must be well-researched, well-planned and incremental. Unfortunately, faith-based and non-profit organizations, while they make a massive impact in serving those who are poor, do not have the resources to replace those functions which, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC 2211), are the legitimate responsibility of government and the private sector. To combat poverty systematically and effectively, government and the private sector must implement changes that address the current weaknesses in our economic and social policies.

These weaknesses fall into two broad categories:

1. The creation of jobs that provide an actual living wage, including an increase in the minimum wage; and,
2. Investment in social policies that support low-income

families and individuals, including:

- Protection and strengthening of the nation’s food and nutrition safety net;
- Improvements and expansion in Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- Universal health insurance coverage;
- Expanded access to safe, affordable and stable child care for working families;
- Improved access to fair, equitable and non-exploitative financial services;
- Public and workplace policies that support and strengthen the family;
- Increased availability of affordable housing and protections from predatory lenders;
- Improvement and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) including a Kentucky Earned Income Tax Credit;
- Improved access to education and training which prepare people for work; and,
- Support for such policy improvements through progressive tax policies that will benefit lower and middle income taxpayers while asking those who have more to pay more.

From a Judeo-Christian perspective, the existence of pervasive poverty implies that the covenant with God has been ruptured. When our brothers and sisters stand outside the tent, looking in on the good things of life that are inaccessible to them, our communal relationship with God is not in right order. The injustice of poverty and inequality calls out for change. Our own Catholic social teaching informs us that moral values should inform our personal choices *and* our efforts on behalf of just public policies. These values include the solidarity and dignity of all humans, the dignity of work and the rights of workers, the call to family and community, human rights, the stewardship of the gifts given to us by God and a preferential option for those who are poor.

The tolerance of widespread poverty and such vast economic inequality in our midst not only undermines our covenant with the Creator, but also weakens our democracy by violating the most basic sense of fairness and equality. By conscientiously and prayerfully informing ourselves as to the scope and effect of poverty in our culture and by sharing our concerns with those elected to represent us, we can restore the sense of community that drew our forbearers together into human solidarity. By both shaping and advocating for policies which address the daunting poverty experienced today by 37 million Americans, we will indeed restore comfort those who sorrow, tend those who were sick, clothe the naked and give shelter to the homeless and the stranger. And in doing so we will restore our own legitimacy as prophets and messengers of freedom, justice and equality.

This is the first in a series of four articles related to the issue of poverty prepared by the diocesan directors of Kentucky’s Catholic Charities agencies. For more information, visit catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/.



This is the sixth in a series of articles by the CCK Hispanic Committee on the **Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform** which aims to reach beyond the networks of the participating national agencies, and to enlist the support of Catholic individuals and institutions in dioceses throughout the country.

Visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org for more information. Le invitamos a visitar nuestra página con regularidad, debido a que se estará actualizando constantemente con materiales, noticias relevantes y otra información que esperamos sea de su utilidad.

Immigrant Youth: Resource for Church and State

By
Patti Murphy



Patti Murphy

As the Congressional debate on immigration reform unfolded, the secular media has characterized immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, in a negative light. In this article I intend to shed light on aspects of immigrant life that may not be familiar to the average reader. The focus is immi-

grant children and youth.

Let me share with you an inspiring process that Catholic Hispanic youth and young adults have been involved in now for over a year. Last summer young Hispanic leaders in parishes all across the country led a series of five reflections and gathered information and suggestions about a common vision for Hispanic youth ministry from other young Hispanics in their parishes. These parish results have filtered through diocesan and regional gatherings where young adult delegates have prioritized them. In addition, delegates did the necessary fundraising to allow them to attend the First National Encounter for Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry at Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, June 8-11, 2006, where participants will prioritize the final results.

As I attended the Southeast Regional Encounter in March with delegates from our Diocese, the enthusiasm, dedication and prophetic voice of the Hispanic young people inspired me. One result of their work seems particularly pertinent. It was ranked second by the regional participants as the most prophetic, global, urgent, feasible element with multiple benefits for Hispanic youth ministry: recognize the gifts of the young people and create opportunities to put them to use serving the community.

The element ranked first was to promote the personal encounter with Jesus.

The fact that the reflection of thousands of young Hispanics has led to such a conclusion shows their mature view of the Church and issues a challenge to the Church and the nation. As a Church do we see immigrant youth as a group of people with gifts ready to serve the community? Or do we see them as a burden to a Church stretched for resources? As a nation do we see immigrant children and youth as having great potential when properly nurtured and

educated? Or do we simply view them as troublemakers overcrowding our schools and increasing our tax burden?

The Bishops of the United States have recognized the gift of immigrants and the implication it has for youth ministry as expressed in this quote from *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* (USCCB, 1997): "Adolescents today are growing up in a culturally diverse society. The perceived image of the United States has shifted from a melting pot to a multihued tapestry. The strength and beauty of the tapestry lie in the diverse colors and textures of its component threads—the values and traditions claimed by the different racial and ethnic groups that constitute the people of the United States. Ministry with adolescents recognizes, values, and responds to the diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds and experiences that exist among adolescents and develops culturally responsive and inclusive programming to address these needs." (pg. 23) See <http://www.usccb.org/laity/youth/rtvcontents.shtml>.

Our challenge is to stop seeing immigrant children and youth as burdens, and start recognizing the beauty that their values and traditions, passed down from their parents, add to our Church and our country. One way we can honor their importance is to help families learn to balance the acculturation process of living in the United States with the passing down of their culture. Instead of insisting that immigrant children "melt" or assimilate into our culture in order to be accepted, we can teach them to be proud of their cultural inheritance and teach all of our children to appreciate people with backgrounds different from their own.

Also, just as the Hispanic youth prioritized the recognition of their gifts at the Encounter, we should "empower all young people for leadership and ministry with their peers—in schools, parishes, and civic communities—by affirming their gifts, equipping them with skills for leadership and ministry, and by placing them in leadership roles or giving them leadership opportunities where they can make a contribution." (*Renewing the Vision*, pg. 43)

If we give immigrant children and youth the chance to embrace their own culture, recognize their gifts and put them to service for others, they will not only improve our Church, but our country as well. They will find belonging in the Church, have a personal encounter with Jesus and be more open to following their vocations later in life. Which means more faithful priests, more dedicated religious sisters, more devoted parents, more honest businessmen, more committed congresswomen, and the list goes on and on.

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Forty Years after *Nostra Aetate*

The Church and Interreligious Dialogue

By
Rev. Ronald Ketteler



Rev. Ronald Ketteler

Globalization is a fact of life in the Third Millennium. The global dimension that is experienced in economics, politics, and culture has also entered onto the horizon of the religions of the world.

In the preparatory phase for the celebration of the Great Jubilee in the year 2000, Pope John Paul II (d. 2005) viewed that historical moment as “a great opportunity, especially in view of the events of recent decades, for interreligious dialogue, in accordance with the specific guidelines set down by the Second Vatican Council in its declaration *Nostra Aetate* on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions.” [*Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (1994): n. 53]

In referring to the profound renewal of the Council as the “preparation of that springtime of Christian life” envisioned in the Great Jubilee, Pope John Paul II had noted:

No Council had spoken so clearly about Christian unity, about dialogue with non-Christian religions, about the specific meaning of the Old Covenant and Israel, about the dignity of each person's conscience, about the principle of religious liberty, about the different cultural conditions within which the Church carries out her missionary mandate, and about the means of social communication. [TMA n.19]

The Second Vatican Council was “a providential event, whereby the Church began the more immediate preparation for the Jubilee of the Second Millennium.”(TMA n: 17)

In retrospect, thirty-five years before the advent of the Jubilee, the “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” had opened with words which resounded with promise and hope for the future:

In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely the relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship. [NA n.1]

The Council thereby moved the era of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue into the mainstream of Catholic life.

In initiating dialogue with the world religions, the

“Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions” (*Nostra Aetate*) holds a place similar to that of the “Decree on Ecumenism” (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) which stands as the magna charta of ecumenical dialogue.

The commemoration of the 40th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate* (1965) is an apropos time to focus renewed attention on its teaching.

The substance of the Declaration has been incorporated into the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1997). Referring to *Nostra Aetate*, the Catechism acknowledges that the Church's bond with non-Christian religions is grounded in “the common origin and end of the human race.”(CCC n. 842. Cf. NA n.1)

Nostra Aetate first explicitly mentions Hinduism and Buddhism as well as other religions in briefly reviewing the religious sense manifest among the peoples of the world. It affirms that “[t]he Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.” In addition, the Church encourages Catholics through dialogue and collaboration to “recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the social-cultural values among these men.” (NA n.2)

The most prominent feature of *Nostra Aetate* is found in the historic statement on the relationship of the Church to the Jewish people. (NA n.4)

From the beginning of the Council, the conciliar deliberations focused on the need for a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations rooted in “the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.” Article 4 of the Declaration identifies the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews as the basis for mutual respect enhanced by biblical and theological studies along with fraternal dialogues.

Nostra Aetate firmly asserts that the spirit of Gospel love “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time by anyone.”

Since the Declaration attends to the great monotheistic religions linked to Abrahamic faith, the Church's relationship to Muslims is also singled out. *Nostra Aetate* states that the “[P]lan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day [LG n. 16. Cf. NA n. 3].” (CCC n. 841)

While *Nostra Aetate* recognized the hostilities of the past, it called for a sincere working “for mutual understanding and to preserve, as well as to promote for the benefit of all mankind, social justice and moral welfare as well as peace and freedom.” (NA n. 3)

Since the time of the Council, postconciliar teaching and directives have implemented the principles of interreligious dialogue and collaboration set forth in *Nostra Aetate*. In 1964 Pope Paul VI created the Secretariat for Non-Christians which was later renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) in 1988.

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The Church and Interreligious Dialogue

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In 1991, the PCID issued "Dialogue and Proclamation." The document categorized various forms of dialogue: 1) The dialogue of life; 2) the dialogue of action; 3) the dialogue of theological exchange; and 4) the dialogue of religious experience. (D&P n. 42)

In explaining the interdependence of the various forms of dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation* emphasizes that "all local churches, and all members of these churches, are called to dialogue, though not in the same way." (D&P n. 43)

Interreligious dialogue is not limited to the *dialogue of theological exchange* which engages specialists. At the level of day-to-day life in society, men and women of diverse religious heritages attempt to live together in an open and neighborly spirit, sharing their joys and sorrows, their human problems and preoccupations. This *dialogue of life*, which entails "contacts in daily life and common commitment to action, will normally open the door for cooperation in promoting human and spiritual values." In time such efforts may also inspire the *dialogue of religious experience* wherein "persons rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or the Absolute."

The *dialogue of action* accentuates the need for establishing integral development, social justice, and human liberation. Its scope ranges from advocacy for human rights and the seeking of solutions to the major societal problems of the day to the provision of education for justice and peace.

Undoubtedly, in the wake of the Council, the most dramatic witness to the Church's commitment to interreligious dialogue has been exemplified in the papal journeys of Pope Paul VI and of Pope John Paul II. Those ongoing worldwide encounters undertaken by the Bishops of Rome unquestionably symbolized the irrevocable initiative of the Church to participate in the mission of interreligious dialogue and relationships.

Now Pope Benedict XVI stands in continuity with his predecessors in the tradition of the Second Vatican Council and the commitment to inter-religious dialogue.

On April 25, 2005, in addressing the representatives of world religions who had attended his installation as Bishop of Rome, Pope Benedict XVI expressed the Church's desire "to continue building bridges of friendship with the followers of all religions in order to seek the true good of every person and of society as a whole."

The longing for peace in a world frequently marked by conflict, violence and war mandates the work of building peace as "a duty to which all peoples must be committed, especially those who profess to belong to religious traditions."

In the same address the Holy Father regards the joint willingness to come together and to engage in dialogue to be "a valuable contribution to building peace on solid foundations."

In this vein, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* points out: "The social teaching of the Church is also characterized by a constant call to dialogue among all members of the world's religions so that together they will be able to seek the most appropriate forms of cooperation." (CSDC n. 537) As Pope John Paul II stated in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), the common commitment to integral human development and the pursuit of peace among peoples finds unparalleled support and depth of conviction in religion.



Retired Archbishop of Louisville, Thomas C. Kelly, O.P., listens to State Senate President, David Williams, moments before leading an opening prayer and receiving a Senate citation honoring his 25 years of service to the Archdiocese in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.



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