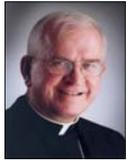


## *Public Policy Leadership Ends and Begins Anew*



On June 12, 2007 Pope Benedict XVI appointed Bishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Knoxville as Archbishop of Louisville. Joseph Edward Kurtz was born August 18, 1946, in Mahanoy City, Pennsylvania. He studied at

St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia and did post-graduate work at Marywood College in Scranton, where he earned a Masters in Social Work.

Ordained a priest of the Allentown, Pennsylvania, diocese on March 18, 1972, he served there for 27 years, working in social services, diocesan administration, and parish ministry.

In his new role as Archbishop of Louisville, he also becomes the chairman of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky Board of Directors. He graciously accepted a request to offer his thoughts in response to the following questions.

**WITNESS** You have much experience in Pennsylvania and Tennessee with their state public policy efforts. Why do you see the Catholic Church's involvement in public policy as important?

**ARCHBISHOP KURTZ** The Catholic Church has a rich teaching, founded on God's Revelation through Sacred Scripture and Tradition and confirmed in natural law (a moral order written on the hearts of each human person). I believe that in that tradition we are called to help shape our culture and have an effect on the laws of our land. Living in the United States with its cherished freedom and pluralism, I believe our action to have positive influence on public policy is not only a right as citizens of this great nation but also a deep responsibility. The laws are extremely important on helping to shape a culture. While it is true that just laws are not a guarantee of a conversion of heart, good laws help to shape good moral decisions.

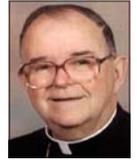
For the past three decades I have been intimately involved in the work of influencing public policy; first in the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and more recently in Tennessee and on the national level through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. In all cases, the fundamental conviction of the dignity of every human person, created and sustained by God, and the deep call to stewardship of creation have shaped a concern that goes beyond simply protecting the interests of the Church. This concern involves a thirst for true justice.

It is extremely important that our Church teaching on social justice be presented accurately. Fundamental to any understanding of our Catholic Social Teaching is, of course, the protection and defense of the human person from conception to natural death. I have found that the average Catholic, when his or her conscience is formed correctly, embraces and seeks to fulfill the baptismal call to renew the face of the earth. I find that any efforts by the Church to influence policy need to be accompanied by that preparation of each

For forty years, Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P. has been a public policy leader at the national and state levels. He joined the staff of the Apostolic Delegation in Washington, D.C. in 1965 and served there as secretary and archivist until he became Associate General Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and United States Catholic Conference (now United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) on June 1, 1971.

He was appointed General Secretary in 1977 and remained in that post until 1981 when he became Archbishop of Louisville and Chair of the Kentucky Bishops public policy agency, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky (CCK).

Reflecting over four decades on the reasons why the bishops are interested in the political arena, Archbishop Kelly said, "In recent years, our political process has suffered from polarizing attitudes and discourse in which it is easy to lose sight of the common good. One of the ways in which we have tried to remind our fellow citizens about common good issues and communicate our respect for human life and dignity is through the important work of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky. The work of this statewide office has been impressive and compelling. The Catholic Conference has a unique role in communicating gospel values to our legislators and educating all about the relevancy of these values to the issues we face each day as citizens. We must continue to remind legislators that the poorest of the poor are God's blessed and holy people as we work for justice in every part of our Commonwealth. I am grateful to all of the staff and volunteers who carry out this sometimes tough and contentious but always prophetic ministry."



Catholic to participate in society as good citizens.

**WITNESS** You are very active in state and national social service ministries and marriage, family and pro-life leadership. You chair the USCCB Committee on Marriage and Family Life, serve as a member of the USCCB Administrative Committee, serve as a member of USCCB's Pro-Life Committee, and are a member of Catholic Relief Services board. Why this significant focus of your time and energy?

**ARCHBISHOP KURTZ** My involvement in the life of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has been a matter of my saying "yes" when asked. I was pleased in 2000 to offer my assistance to Cardinal Bevilacqua to serve on the Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities. Defense of Human Life had always been a passion of mine. I recall that, shortly after my priestly ordination in 1972, I wrote a letter to the editor in Allentown, Pennsylvania in defense of human life and in opposition to Roe v Wade, which judgment occurred less than a year after I became a priest.

Then I was asked by Bishop McShea to seek a Masters Degree in Social Work in the early 1970s to prepare for service in Catholic Charities. This led to a deep involvement in the work of Catholic Charities, in family therapy and in the Family Life Office, which was a part of Catholic Social Agency in the Diocese of Allentown. For two decades I was involved in the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, serving in the Departments for Social Welfare and Family Life. It was natural for me to say "yes" more recently to being involved with the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family and most recently to serve on the board of Catholic Relief Services.

In all cases I see a rich interplay between formal efforts of the Church to effect positive change in public policies and active steps to involve Catholics in their living out the Gospel call to follow Jesus. Obviously there is a need for a conversion of heart of each human person to make life-giving and morally sound decisions each day.

*Continued on page 3*

## Catholic Conference Board of Directors



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*“We Are All Really Responsible For All.”*

## Opportunities to Support Pregnant Women in 2008

By Ed Monahan  
Executive Director



Some abortions are chosen by women who do not see having their child full-term as a realistic option. Common sense public policy improvements nationally and in Kentucky can help more women see birth as a possibility.

Nationally, in 2006 in the 109th Congress U.S. Representative Lincoln Davis introduced the Pregnant Women's Support Act which addressed some of the reasons women cite for choosing abortions.

Women who have had abortions report the following reasons:\*

- 21% – can't afford a baby
- 21% – are unready for responsibility
- 16% – concerned about how having a baby could change their lives
- 12% – have problems with relationship or want to avoid single parenthood
- 11% – are not mature enough/are too young to have children
- 8% – have all the children they want/have all grown-up children
- 3% – possible fetal health problem
- 3% – maternal health problem
- 1% – pregnancy resulted from rape or incest
- 1% – husband/partner wants them to have abortion
- 1% – don't want others to know they had sex or are pregnant

Upon introduction of the Act, Deirdre McQuade, spokeswoman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, said “Given the staggering 1.3 million abortions in the United States each year, the Pro-Life Secretariat applauds constructive initiatives to support women and their children, both born and unborn. Everyone can agree that no woman should choose abortion due to economic duress. We look forward to working with Congressman Davis to accomplish these goals through initiatives that respect the dignity and lives of both mothers and their children.”

The Act did not pass the 109th Congress but it has been re-introduced in the 110th Congress. The current Pregnant Women's Support Act (H.R.3192) provides for programs that reduce the need for abortion, help women bear healthy children, and support new parents. It includes home visits to pregnant women by registered nurses for education on health needs of infants and information on child health and development designed to instill in mothers confidence in their abilities to provide for the health needs of their newborns; an expansion of tax credits for adoptions; and increased funding for child care among many other provisions.

In expressing support for this measure, USCCB's Pro-Life leader, Richard Doerflinger, said, “...most women undergoing abortion say they did not prefer abortion, but saw no other way to preserve their educational goals, career or way of life. No one offered them a choice other than abortion. By offering life-affirming services to pregnant women and their children, as proposed in federal bills like the ‘Pregnant Women Support Act’ (H.R. 3192), we could make a substantial impact on the number of abortions.”

There are public policy measures that can have influence on reducing the number of abortions. Kentucky has an opportunity to further support pregnant women in 2008 by expanding its Health Access Nurturing Development Services (HANDS) program, KRS 211.690, to more women and their families, and by enacting a state tax credit to provide more assistance to those who adopt children. Currently, Kentucky's HANDS program serves first time mothers, 902 KAR 4:120, from their pregnancy until the child is two years old. Mothers receive individualized home visits and assistance on issues they face with their pregnancy. This program promotes positive pregnancy outcomes, healthy child development, safe homes and self-sufficient families. With more funding in 2008, HANDS can reach more of Kentucky's pregnant women.

\*Sources: USCCB web page; The Alan Guttmacher Institute, "Reasons Why Women Have Induced Abortions: Evidence from 27 Countries" *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 24 (August 1998). The Alan Guttmacher Institute, "U.S. Women Who Obtain Abortions: Who and Why?" *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 4, (July/August 1988).

## Archbishop Kurtz Shares Thoughts on Church's Role in Public Square

Continued from page 1

Likewise, there is an intimate connection between the way in which laws help to shape patterns of behavior and how people make decisions. An example of this interplay is the current commitment of the U.S. Bishops of which I am actively engaged: the Pastoral Initiative on Marriage. A primary thrust will be the conversion of hearts of each married couple and family as well as those who prepare for marriage immediately and remotely. At the same time there will be great efforts to ensure that the culture in which we live, sustained by the law of the land, will foster and make such acts of conversion possible. Therefore, we will defend the definition of marriage as a union between one man and woman vigorously as we promote healthy marriages. In the draft of the pastoral letter on marriage being prepared for 2008, the final section is envisioned to address community support of marriage. Thus, the end of the pastoral letter will address the bedrock of society necessary to hold together a society. The direction of the letter might change, but I am sure that this emphasis on community support and just laws will be very prominent.

**WITNESS** What would you like readers to know about the Church's focus on human life and human dignity in the public square?

**ARCHBISHOP KURTZ** I believe that I partially answered that question above. However, allow me to add that our Holy Father Pope

Benedict's initial emphasis on God's Love for us is fundamental and gives shape to our direction. God sustains us with His love and grace and so allows us humbly and with conviction to form our consciences well. I believe that God's grace leads us to seek His truth and to do so with pastoral charity. Thus, it is important for us to create a civil atmosphere in our public discussions and advocacy, one based on that fundamental desire to treat each human person with great dignity. Second, there is the need to articulate the truth of our faith accurately. The recent *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) is given to us by the Church to guide our walk along the path of truth. I truly believe that this path allows for courageous and focused advocacy in the public square in a manner that remains always civil and respectful.

I also believe that every action in the public square ought to have some echo in the pastoral life of the Church calling each to conversion of heart to Christ. For example, our efforts to protect the life of the innocent child in the womb should be matched by clear pastoral efforts to reach out to mothers and families who experience pressures that lead to the taking of innocent life. Our help for pregnant women is intimately connected with public advocacy to defend the right to life and gives shape and credibility to the conviction. Grounded in prayer, such actions are motivated by the grace of Christ and allow that grace to grow more deeply within our hearts.

## ALL Kentucky Children Deserve the Best Education Possible



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**INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF KENTUCKY'S EDUCATION THROUGH GIFT**

# Bishops Publish Statements on Human Life and Labor

Kentucky's four Catholic Bishops have consistently proclaimed the sanctity of human life and dignity. Since 1984 they have issued several pastoral statements on various aspects of the church's teaching on these matters. (All these statements are available on the publications page of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky's website: [www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org).)

The newest in this series of statements, *Reverence for Life... A Need for "A Heart That Sees,"* was recently released to coincide with the annual celebration in October of Respect Life month. This offered Kentucky pastors and others responsible for religious formation with another tool to educate the Catholic faithful about this important area of church doctrine.

The Bishops point out how Pope Benedict XVI sees the practice of charity at the heart of the Church's mission and ministry; it is a theme central to his theological vision. His first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est (God is Love)*, presents a theological reflection on the ministry of charity as an essential element of the Church. The ecclesial ministry of charity bears a commitment to justice.

In this new statement the Bishops emphasize that "abortion is the fundamental human rights issue, for to diminish respect for the right to life of the unborn is tantamount to diminishing respect for life in all other contexts. The heritage of the Catholic social doctrine is not limited to questions touching upon economic and political rights. It is concerned with human life issues—abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research, the death penalty, and the violence of war fall within the scope of social morality."

The statement also notes that recently Pope Benedict XVI has called abortion "a deep wound in society," a threat inflicted by ethical blindness. In a prophetic voice raised in defense of a fundamental right to life, the Holy Father stated: "I am acting as an advocate for a profoundly human need, speaking out on behalf of unborn children who have no voice. I do not close my eyes to the difficulties and conflicts that many women are experiencing, and I realize that the credibility of what we say also depends on what the Church is doing to help women in trouble."

To help women in trouble has been a focus of the work of Kentucky's bishops in the past and in *Reverence for Life... A Need for "A Heart That Sees"* they renew "the commitment of the Catholic Church in Kentucky to seeking and supporting public policy efforts to achieve the long-range legal protection of the unborn and to the provision of compassionate presence, service, and care by means of a variety of measures that support life: material assistance, social services pertaining to adoption and foster care, pregnancy counseling centers, spiritual assistance and counseling, programs of formation on the virtue of chastity, and education in natural family planning."

To demonstrate a commitment to life they write about some of the programs they currently support :

Since 1984, we have sponsored Opportunities for Life, a statewide telephone hotline staffed by volunteers from all over Kentucky. OFL provides support and assistance to women in crisis pregnancies and information about resources and support to inform women of their options in choosing life for their babies.

Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Services provide adoption services and guidance to women about adoption. These agencies also provide on-going counseling and parent-ing education.

Project Rachel is a post-abortion healing program available in several locations throughout our dioceses. Project

Rachel creates an opportunity for healing, support and reconciliation.

We likewise pledge compassionate care in respect for the dignity of all who are wounded by the violence of abortion. In this ministry, we join the national body of bishops in its pledge to "uphold the spirituality of the Good Samaritan."

In closing, the Bishops reflect on how prayer leads to works: "The spirituality of the works of mercy arises from our prayerful encounter with Jesus. The contemplative outlook attained through prayer illumines the heart, "a heart that sees" the face of Christ mirrored in the faces of "the least" of our brothers and sisters – the weakest, the powerless, the voiceless in our midst."

Kentucky is one of the nation's poorest states. For that reason the economic uncertainty and the ever-widening income inequality and volatility of so many of our neighbors rise to the top of issues of concern to Kentucky's four Catholic Bishops.

In response, they have recently issued their first pastoral statement honoring work and those who labor: *Just Work: A Pastoral Letter About Work and Justice*.

The Bishops celebrate "our participation in God's creation by the work we do in caring for our neighbor *individually* through our acts of charity and in caring for the human family *collectively* as a state through our acts of justice." They call on Catholics and others of good will to see anyone in need as a neighbor who deserves their care.

The Bishops expressed their gratitude to all those who come to the aid of persons in need and praised their charitable actions. But, after noting that Kentucky has made recent public policy progress towards a more just social order, they point out that there are areas where structural injustices impact the lives of thousands of Kentuckians and require attention:

- poverty,
- health care,
- immigration, and
- revenue to meet human needs.

The social love that propels our charity, the Bishops said, demands that we pursue a just social order where "each person receives what is his or her due." Citing Pope Benedict XVI's plea that poverty is a "plague against which humanity must fight without cease," the Bishops reflected on the significant poverty of our state, the 5th poorest in the nation, and called for public policy initiatives to address the state's persistent poverty. "Poverty ranks as Kentucky's most distinctive problem as it endangers the future of our Commonwealth. Persistent poverty weakens human dignity." The Bishops identify several changes in public policy that will promote justice and work for the betterment of the common good:

- creation of a refundable state earned income tax credit;
- expansion of individual development accounts;
- improving the skills of our children and displaced adults;
- providing adequate income supports; and
- improving early childhood care and education.

"We express our deep gratitude to the working men and women of Kentucky for your good, generative work throughout the year," the Bishops said. "We appreciate the infusion of life into our Commonwealth through your labor. Together, we have much more work to do."

The complete text of both these pastoral statements are available on the website, [www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org).

# Policy Changes Can Reduce Poverty in Kentucky

By  
Richard Murphy



Richard Murphy

Is it possible to reduce the number of persons living poverty in Kentucky by one-half by the year 2020? In the last issue of **WITNESS**, Bill Jones explained the extent of poverty in Kentucky, and then challenged readers to begin addressing this great scandal of poverty amidst plenty in the Commonwealth and the nation. Catholic Charities USA is leading a campaign inviting people of goodwill in every state in the nation to recognize poverty as a threat to the common good, and get involved with finding a way to reduce poverty.

But where do you start? There are both economic and social policy changes that can move Kentucky closer to the goal. This article focuses on three such policies: improvement in access to fair, equitable, and non-exploitive financial services; increased availability of affordable housing and protection from predatory lenders; and improvement and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), including a state refundable Kentucky Earned Income Tax Credit.

## Improve Fair, Equitable and Non-Exploitive Financial Services

People and families of low and moderate income often borrow money to obtain the items they need, especially for major purchases. The issue of concern for them is how to obtain fair and just terms for borrowing money. Not everyone is as good a credit risk as another, so it is clear that the cost of borrowing money will vary to reflect that risk to the creditor. However most people would consider interest rates and fees charged beyond a certain point ruinous.

Consider the case reported on September 13, 2007 in the Washington Post. Nikita Steward describes how Stacy Brown needed help paying bills and borrowed \$500 in 2001 at the pay day lender, Check 'n Go, in Washington D.C. After six years he finally paid off the loan at a cost of \$14,997 in fees and interest.

How is it possible to charge interest rates and fees of this magnitude? Dr. Elizabeth Warren, a Harvard Law professor specializing in bankruptcy law, partially answers the question in her book, *The Two Income Trap*. She writes that in 1979 the U.S. Supreme Court, in response to a question about the maximum interest a bank could charge on a loan—the rate allowed by the state in which the bank is located or the rate allowed by the state in which the loan is made—decided the maximum interest rate charged is that allowed in the state where the bank is located. As a result, a few states changed their usury laws to attract banks. This began the roll back of usury laws in the nation that had been in effect since colonial times.

On its "History of Lending" webpage, Americans for Fairness in Lending define "usury" as the practice of lending money and charging the borrower interest, especially at an exorbitant or illegally high rate. They note that the Prophet Ezekiel included usury in a list of "abominable things," along with rape, murder, robbery and idolatry. (Ez 18:5-13) The Code of Hammurabi, the teaching of Plato and Aristotle, and Roman law all condemned usury because it often led to enslavement of the borrower and family.

Therefore, a key element to combating poverty is to find ways to help low to medium income earners borrow what they need without being subject to ruinous interest and fees. The Virginia Interfaith Center has an effort underway to limit the maximum amount of in-

terest charged to 36%. The federal government already limits payday lenders at military installations to a maximum 36% rate.

## Increase Availability of Affordable Housing and Protection from Predatory Lenders

One big part of the American Dream is for each person/family to own a home, or at least have a decent place of one's own to live. Catholic social doctrine clearly teaches that people have a moral right to affordable, decent, safe housing. For many, however, this has become a very difficult goal to reach with the sharply increasing cost of housing, and the relatively flat wage growth for the working poor for the past three decades. A Kentucky League of Cities study noted that from 2000-2004, the median house value in Kentucky increased by 14% while the median income rose by only 5%.

According to StateMaster.com, 25.6% of homebuyers (over a million people in Kentucky) are spending 30%, or more of household income on monthly mortgage costs. (Affordable is spending less than 30% of income on housing.) Nearly 40% (39.5%) of all renters spend 30% or more of household income on rent and utilities. According to a Harvard University study, 11.1% of Kentucky households spend more than 50% of their income on housing.

Additional safe, affordable housing is clearly needed in Kentucky. The Kentucky Housing Corporation estimated in 2003 that more than 130,000 homes were needed, and fewer than 102,500 assisted rental units were available to 235,800 families that need them. Further, the Corporation said that there are over 4,000 people homeless in Kentucky on any given day.

The subprime mortgage crisis is taking its toll on homebuyers and housing prices are dropping. For the first quarter of 2006 PRnewswire.com listed 2,276 foreclosures in Kentucky. The numbers will likely increase as the crisis continues. A study in December 2006 by The Center for Responsible Lending estimated that one in five homeowners with a subprime loan will likely lose their homes to foreclosure. Assistance at the state and federal level is urgently needed to help homeowners keep their homes when possible.

A solution starts with the recognition that housing is a key aspect of economic prosperity and social stability for Kentucky. It creates jobs. Falling prices make houses more affordable. Hopefully, the increase in the minimum wage will help persons afford housing.

A variety of strategies are necessary to respond to the housing crisis: support for programs like Habitat for Humanity; development of Individual Development Account to assist low and moderate income earners own a home; grants through urban homesteading programs to people with insufficient income to buy a home; and legislative advocacy to assure ongoing funding for national and state affordable housing trust funds.

## Improve and Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Include a Kentucky Earned Income Tax Credit.

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been in existence since 1975. It was created to shield low-wage workers from rising payroll taxes and to provide a modest addition to low wages. It has been expanded under both Democratic and Republican administrations in 1986, 1990, 1993, and 2001. The credit's "refundability" distinguishes it from other credits in that taxpayers receive the full value of the EITC regardless of their tax liability. It rewards work, and many economists have recognized it as the nation's most effective anti-poverty program for working, low income families. The EITC is currently a \$40 billion program and assists over 20 million working Americans. The EITC is a graduated subsidy to workers that supplements income up to a certain point based on income level and family size. As income increases, the EITC refund diminishes until it reaches \$0 at the \$37,783 level. Up to 4 million Americans are

*This is the second in a series of four articles about poverty prepared by the diocesan directors of Kentucky's Catholic Charities agencies. For more information, visit [catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/](http://catholiccharitiesusa.org/poverty/). Richard Murphy directs Catholic Charities in Owensboro.*

*Continued on page 6*



This is the seventh 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](http://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.*

# The Root Causes of Immigration

By Rev. Thomas Smith, O.F.M. Conv.



Rev. Thomas Smith,  
O.F.M. Conv.

There have been large groups of people immigrating throughout history. This land of ours was probably settled first by people who crossed the current Bering Strait from Asia. After the "discovery" by the Europeans, many came from Europe to find freedom of religion, a new start, or riches in a land yet to be explored. Other groups came looking for employment, escape from violence or repression, or for education. There is no single cause for the movements of people from one area to another. The U.S. Bishops note this fact:

"We must never forget that many immigrants come to this country in desperate circumstances. Some have fled political persecution, war, and economic devastation...Others have waded on finding a better life in this country in the face of economic desperation at home. As Pope John Paul II has noted, 'In many regions of the world today people live in tragic situations of instability and uncertainty. It does not come as a surprise that in such contexts the poor and the destitute make plans to escape, to seek a new land that can offer them bread, dignity and peace. . .'" U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, Nov. 15, 2000

In many ways it is the economic and political policies of the United States that cause an even greater push for immigration to the U.S. The poorest countries of the world account for only 0.4 percent of international trade, yet they lose an estimated \$700 billion a year due to unfair trade rules. The U.S. and other developed countries are currently pursuing "free trade" agreements with many developing countries. Developing countries, which often utilize higher levels of

*Fr. Thomas Smith, O.F.M. Conv. is minister to the Hispanic community at St. Rita Parish in Louisville, Kentucky*

tariffs and taxes on incoming goods in order to gather revenue for their governments, are often forced to eliminate these tariffs and taxes as part of free trade agreements. Yet, many people concerned with poverty are pointing to statistics that show that unregulated, "free" trade primarily benefits wealthy corporations and wealthy countries; poverty is increasing around the world despite increased free trade.

One of the most unjust aspects of the trade system is the use of agricultural subsidies by the U.S. and the European Union. The U.S. provides billions of dollars of agricultural subsidies, most of which goes to a few large agribusinesses who control most of the agricultural production in the U.S. This allows agricultural production to occur en masse and to knock smaller competitors - in the U.S. and in developing countries - out of business. (Education for Justice, April 2, 2006)

I have worked with the Spanish speaking community for about five and a half years, and have heard many stories of why people come to the United States in spite of the strict requirements, the harsh journey, the separation of families, and the fear of an unexpected return. I also spent four months traveling in 11 Latin American countries to stay in the homes of the families who live here. Many are not just looking for an easy way to make money, and they do not want to avoid the legal process for entry. Often there is no other option. One man whom I knew for three years returned to his family. I saw him shortly after. He lamented that he had not even recognized his own young son when he returned because he had grown so much. But he also said that he had to choose between love for his family and being with them, or returning to the United States to make enough money to support his wife and four children.

The United States cannot solve the economic and political situations of all countries, yet we can promote fair and just policies that do not take advantage of them for the sake of global businesses. We can work with them to reduce indebtedness and poverty, corruption, and violence that affect the need for migration.

## Policy Changes Needed to Reduce Poverty in Kentucky

Continued from page 5

raised above the poverty level each year because of this credit.

According to a recent "Policy Insights" paper from the University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research (UKCPR), [www.ukcpr.org](http://www.ukcpr.org), the EITC brought \$630 million into Kentucky's economy in 2005. That is not small change. Local governments and community organizations should consider assisting eligible taxpayers with filing for and receiving these refundable tax dollars for spending in the local community. The Internal Revenue Services estimates that in any given year, up to 20% of those eligible fail to ask for this tax credit.

The UKCPR paper also effectively argued for a Kentucky EITC. The paper stated that 22 states and the District of Columbia have already implemented their own state version of the EITC. There are many models already in existence to guide the state in implementing its own version of the EITC. In 2005, 62% of poor families in Ken-

tucky had at least one person working, making them eligible for a state EITC if it existed. The UKCPR report estimated that a refundable state EITC could encourage more low-income Kentuckians to work and assist more than 370,000 working poor.

In any economy, it is clear that its various facets are interconnected. In our economy, clearly all of us are connected to one another. Wages a person earns are used to pay for services another person provides, who in turn buys things from others.

In a fair and just economic system all transactions must be in the best interest of all parties, thus providing for the prosperity of all. Violation of trust leads to damage in the system and affects all parties, not just those taken advantage of by those who would exploit others for their own gain. The more the Golden Rule prevails in our economic dealings with one another, *rather than the gold rules*, the richer the common good in our society.

## A Catholic Perspective

# Creation and Evolution in the Bible: Part 1

By  
Rev. Ronald Ketteler



Rev. Ronald Ketteler

Modern biblical studies have created awareness among Catholics that the Bible need not be viewed as a source of scientific knowledge or of history in the modern sense of the terms. The truth of the Bible is a matter of “saving truth,” not necessarily scientific truth. Thus, the appropriate question concerning the inerrancy of the Bible should be phrased: “What kind of ‘truth’ is it?” rather than asking, “Is it true?”

A brief survey of interpretations of the creation narratives taken from representative Catholic scripture scholars and theologians exemplifies current mainstream theological approaches in the Catholic tradition.

There are numerous passages in the Old and the New Testaments that reflect the theme of divine creation. The particular controversy over evolution and belief tends to originate with conflicting interpretations of the creation stories in Chapters 1 and 2 in the Book of Genesis.

For instance, the following passage quoted from the writings of Father Roland E. Murphy, O.Carm., illustrates the contrast in opinions on the meaning of the creation narratives in the light of the doctrine of creation. Father Murphy observed that “Creationism, and there are many forms of it, does not have such a relaxed attitude toward the doctrine of creation as the Bible presents. Genesis gives us two imaginative presentations, but creationism in its drive for literal understanding cannot be satisfied until it has snapped a picture of divine activity it claims to have described in the text. Basically, one can sum up the case (even if more arguments can be mounted) in two statements: (1) There is in the Bible no single portrayal of the creative activity of God. In fact, there are presentations in other books of the Bible that differ from the Genesis accounts (e.g., Ps 89: 5-11). (2) It follows from this that it is incumbent on the reader to shed previous convictions, if necessary, and to allow oneself to be drawn into the level of the text, as simple but as complex as it is.” [*Responses to 101 Questions on the Biblical Torah* (New York: Paulist Press, 1996): 14-15.]

Again, in reference to the Genesis accounts of creation, Father Leslie L. Hoppe, O.F.M., briefly highlights the biblical vision of divine creation according to contemporary Catholic biblical theology: “But these are not the only ways that the ancient Israelites imagined creation as occurring. There are indications elsewhere in the Old Testament that they imagined the world coming into existence in a far different way than described in Genesis.” Father Hoppe cites Psalms 74 and 89 and the Book of Job, cc. 40-41 as examples. [*Priests, Prophets and Sages: Catholic Perspectives on the Old Testament* (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006): 98.]

From a historical perspective, by the 1940s an evolution in Catholic biblical studies was noticeable. *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, the

1943 encyclical of Pope Pius XII on the study of scripture, marked a major moment which had cleared the way for Catholic theologians to pursue the historical-critical methods of biblical studies. A few years later in 1948, a letter from the Pontifical Biblical Commission (PBC) ushered in a new direction for Catholic biblical studies compatible within the context of Catholic doctrinal understanding.

In that directive, the secretary of the Pontifical Commission had forwarded a letter to the late Cardinal Suhard of Paris which addressed the exegesis of Genesis: 1–11.

That document from the PBC set forth a distinction between the fundamental truths necessary for salvation that are conveyed in the biblical texts and the time-conditioned scientific and cultural expressions of those foundational beliefs. It stated: “They relate in simple and figurative language, adapted to the understanding of a less developed people, the fundamental truths presupposed for the economy of salvation, as well as the popular description of the origin of the human race and of the chosen people.”

During the pioneering phase of the new biblical scholarship, fresh vistas of the religious and spiritual meaning of the Bible were opened by the new discoveries of the historical-critical methods of interpretation, of literary genres, and by a return to original languages and documents.

The late Father Bruce Vawter, C.M. published *A Path Through Genesis* in 1954, a study of the Book of Genesis that made contemporary biblical scholarship available for a general educated readership.

After discussing the 1948 letter issued by the PBC, Father Vawter explained those “fundamental truths of faith” on the origin of humankind, a foundation of Jewish and Christian revelations. He wrote: “There is one God, Creator of the universe by an act of his will, who created man in His image and likeness, raised him to a level above his created state and endowed him with gifts which he forfeited through sin, who promised man an eventual redemption from this sin.”

Father Vawter concluded: “These and other truths are taught in the poetic imagery of Genesis’ first three chapters, great songs of faith fashioned by the religious teachers of Israel.”

More than a decade later, Father Eugene H. Maly, a noted biblical scholar on the faculty of Mt. St. Mary’s Seminary in Cincinnati, contributed the article on the Book of Genesis in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (1968). Father Maly, pointed out that “[n]o scholar today would hold that Gn [Genesis] presents history in the modern sense of that term. The sacred authors’ conception of history as a linear movement of events determined by divine interventions and tending to a divinely conceived goal militates against such a presentation.” In a word, the sacred authors “were interested in the ‘facts’ of history only inasmuch as they illustrated the divine plan.”

The “primitive history” that marks the first eleven chapters of Genesis communicates “truths based on historical facts.” Father Maly synthesized such core truths: “There was a creation by God in the beginning of time, a special divine intervention in the creation of man, the existence of the first man in a condition of friendship with God, a fall from that condition, an increasing separation between man and God brought about by man’s sins and a succession of natural catastrophes by which man suffered the consequences of his sins.”

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In accord with modern biblical theology, Father Maly noted that although these truths “are religious explanations that in most cases transcend the competence of modern science, they are at the same time historical in that they explain historical events.”

The developments within contemporary biblical scholarship were validated at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) with the promulgation of *Dei Verbum* (the *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*, 1965). In a seminal passage *Dei Verbum* states: “Seeing that, in Sacred Scripture, God speaks through men in human fashion, it follows that the interpreter of sacred Scriptures, if he is to ascertain what God has wished to communicate to us, should carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind, that meaning which God had thought well to manifest through the medium of their words.” [DV n.12] *Dei Verbum* then continues to unpack the meaning of Section 12 by explicating the principles grounding the interpretation of Scripture in the light of the various literary genres found in the Bible.

Consequently, the consensus that has been reached in Catholic biblical theology maintains that the creation stories in the Bible neither convey scientific information nor address the scientific question of evolution.

Today, without doubt, the first eleven chapters of Genesis are commonly viewed as “primeval history,” an introduction to the pivotal moments of salvation history—the Exodus and the Covenant. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “Thus, the revelation of creation is inseparable from the revelation and forging of the covenant of the one God and his People. Creation is viewed as

the first step toward this covenant, the first and universal witness to God’s all-powerful love.” (CCC n. 288)

In regard to biblical exegesis of the creation accounts in Genesis, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* draws up a succinct summary of those fundamental truths of salvation. The Catechism states that the first three chapters of Genesis express “the truths of creation — its origin and its end in God, its order and goodness, the vocation of man, and finally the drama of sin and the hope of salvation.” (CCC n. 289)

In an address to members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 3, 1981, Pope John Paul II had affirmed the distinctive nature of the “saving truth” of Scripture. Insofar as the origin of the universe is concerned, that address entitled “The Path of Scientific Discovery” stressed the difference between religious truth and science in the Bible. The late Holy Father observed: “The Bible speaks to us of the origin of the universe and its makeup, not to provide us with a scientific treatise, but in order to state the correct relationships of man with God and with the universe.”

That 1981 address highlighted the substance of the theology of creation in the creation narratives in these words: “Sacred scripture wishes to simply to declare that the world was created by God, and in order to teach this truth it expresses itself in the terms of the cosmology in use at the time of the writer.”

After affirming that the Bible does not provide a scientific treatise on the origin of the universe, Pope John Paul II’s concluding comment was poignant: “Any other teaching about the origin and makeup of the universe is alien to the intentions of the Bible, which does not wish to teach us how heaven was made but how one goes to heaven.”

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