

Pope Benedict XVI Accepts Bishop McRaith's Resignation

On January 5, 2009, the Vatican and the Diocese of Owensboro announced that Bishop John McRaith had resigned. In a statement released by the diocese, Bishop McRaith said "I do not have a life-threatening illness, but my doctors have advised me to slow down, and I concluded that my resignation was in the best interest of the diocese."

In Frankfort both the Senate and the House adopted resolutions honoring Bishop McRaith for his service to the people of Kentucky.

Both resolutions noted his 26 years of service in a diocese that spans 32 Western Kentucky counties. They recognized his pastoral leadership of "79 individual parishes, two Newman Centers, three high schools, two middle schools, 13 elementary schools, and approximately 60,000 Catholics."

Bishop McRaith was raised in Minnesota and graduated from St. John's Prep School in Colledgeville, Minnesota, from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and from The School of Theology, Saint Bernard Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. He was ordained a priest on February 21, 1960, in the Diocese of New



Ulms, Minnesota, and he was ordained as the third Bishop of the Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky on December 15, 1982.

Bishop McRaith has served on numerous committees over the years for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and he currently serves as a member of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky and the Kentucky Council of Churches and as a board member for Brescia University, the Daniel Pitino Shelter, The McAuley Free Clinic, and Lourdes Hospital Foundation in Paducah, Kentucky.

One clause in the resolutions captured the essence of Bishop McRaith's tenure in Owensboro:

"...Bishop McRaith has been highly regarded by the faithful Catholic community of Western Kentucky and is widely viewed as a humble, magnetic, and holy man who has been a wonderful priest and a charismatic bishop."

Former Archbishop of Louisville, Thomas C. Kelly, stated, "He has a deep sensitivity to rural life questions and he has pastoral experience in the rural life area." He was executive director of the Catholic Rural Life Office from 1971 - 1978.

Fr. J. Michael Clark will serve as Administrator of the diocese until a new bishop is appointed.

CCK Executive Director Hired; Bishops Appoint Robert Castagna To Be Their Voice in Frankfort



The Roman Catholic Bishops of Kentucky have appointed Robert J. Castagna as the Executive Director of Catholic Conference of Kentucky. Mr. Castagna succeeds Edward Monahan who resigned in August to become Kentucky's Public Advocate. Mr. Castagna arrived in Frankfort in the first week of January, in time for the opening of the 2009 meeting of the General Assembly.

Before his recent service as general counsel and executive director of Aid for Women, Inc. in Chicago, Illinois, Mr. Castagna spent more than 20 years (1984-2006) as general counsel and executive director for the Oregon Catholic Conference.

During his tenure in Oregon, Mr. Castagna was noted for his political skills, knowledge of the Church, and passion on behalf of those in need. He led successful efforts to restore the funding of public assistance for two-parent unemployed families, wrote legislation to address the needs of terminally ill patients, and successfully worked to enact working family

child care tax credits and state earned income tax credits. He also led the "Campaign for Fairness" on behalf of 24 social service and statewide organizations, which successfully lobbied to restore \$60 million in Oregon's Department of Human Services' budget.

A native of Brooklyn, NY, Mr. Castagna earned a bachelor of arts from Fordham University and a law degree from the Catholic University of America.

He has received a number of awards including the 2003 Harvest of Hope Award presented by Oregon's governor on behalf of the Oregon Faith Roundtable Against Hunger; a 1989 "Service Award" from the Oregon Commission on Hispanic Affairs; the 1989 Steward of Life Award from the Oregon Right to Life; and the 2002 "Outstanding Advocacy Award" from the Governor's Commission on Senior Services.

He has served in a number of professional, community, and church activities, including as president of the National Association of State Catholic Conference Directors, as a consultant for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration Committee, and on the board of directors of Maryville Nursing Home and Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon.

In announcing the appointment on behalf of the bishops of Kentucky, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz said, "We are privileged to have someone of Mr. Castagna's stature serving as our public policy leader. His record and accomplishments are outstanding, and it will be a great pleasure to work with him as we continue to keep the Church's positions before the Commonwealth."

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Symbol of Life and Hope: Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic

By Robert J. Castagna
Executive Director



On Wednesday, February 4, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville and Bishop Ronald Gainer of Lexington addressed legislators and others gathered for the annual Kentucky Right to Life rally in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Leaving this moving event, they exited to the street between the Capitol and the Capitol Annex, home to the offices of state legislators and committee hearing rooms, where a truck was parked. Coming from the Right to Life rally, it was quite appropriate that the bishops' next visit was to this symbol of life and hope: a mobile health clinic for the poor.

They crossed the street and approached the long white truck with a number of logos painted on its side naming the organizations supporting the vehicle's mission of health care delivery. One of the logos was that of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky. Archbishop Kurtz and Bishop Gainer entered to greet and thank the staff and to inspect the contents of the Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic. St. Joseph Hospital in Lexington administers the Mobile Health Clinic in collaboration with Appalachian Regional HealthCare, Inc. and St. Claire Regional Medical Center.

The Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic is a symbol of life and hope in a nation where millions suffer without access to health care and where millions struggle with the uncertainty of the economy and loss of jobs.

Now the future of the Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic, this symbol of hope traversing the highways and byways of Kentucky to deliver needed health care, is itself in jeopardy of closing, retired from its rounds in Eastern Kentucky due to reductions in the state budget.

The Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Service started in May 2003, initially funded with \$325,000 in annual funding from the Cabinet for Health and Family Services.

Providing access to primary and specialist health care for the residents of Morgan, Wolfe and Lawrence counties, the Mobile Health Clinic currently serves an average of 2,000 patients per year of whom 57% are

female and 43% are male. This clinic provides access to health care that would not otherwise be available to the residents of these poverty-stricken counties.

Rose Rexroat is the Administrator of the Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Service & Manager, Community Services, for St. Joseph Hospital. The Mobile Health Clinic is her baby. It seems quite appropriate then that I received her email about the planned state budget reduction of \$140,000 on my first day on the job as the new Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.

Rexroat does not let this issue rest and deservedly so, especially since the budget had already been cut by \$24,000 in May 2008. Lives literally hang in the balance unless the administration reverses this ill-advised 2009 funding decision.

Since 2004, the medical assistance available through the Mobile Health Clinic represents the cutting edge of long-distance delivery of health care. Through the use of cameras and telephones, health care professionals at other locations are able to access nurses and patients while in the mobile clinic. Saint Joseph Hospital is the hub manager for telehealth connectivity. The telehealth technology enables the Mobile Clinic to access consultations and specialty services with universities and facilities.

The legislature is leaving decisions about balancing the budget up to the discretion of the executive branch. Governor Steve Beshear and Secretary Janie Miller, his Secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, will make the final decision on the \$140,000 budget cut. Their decision may result in the grounding of the Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic.

Are we our sisters' and brothers' keepers? Keep the symbol of life and hope moving on Kentucky's highways by contacting Governor Beshear and asking him to find the funds necessary to keep the Eastern Kentucky Mobile Health Clinic on the road to deliver health care to those without other options.

Our neighbors in Eastern Kentucky will be grateful that you cared to call the Governor (502-564-2611) on their behalf.

Their lives depend on it.

Catholics @ the Capitol Attracts 342 Parishioners and 34 Legislators

Between November 2008 and February 2009, Catholics @ the Capitol events took place in the four Catholic dioceses of Kentucky.

Holding these meetings in each of the four dioceses was a new approach for the Catholic Conference, a pilot program approved by the bishops. Staff, after consultation with committee members, asked the bishops for permission to try this new approach in odd-numbered years when the "short" 30-day session of the General Assembly is held. In those years it is difficult to know when is the most effective time to bring people to Frankfort to meet with their legislators.

The General Assembly calendar, for example, originally called for lawmakers to be in Frankfort during the week of February 16, but it changed after the session began and they recessed until the week of February 23. Had the Catholic Conference scheduled its annual Catholics @ the Capitol event on a day during the week of February 16, few legislators would have been available to meet with constituents.

As reported in the last issue, the Conference worked with its advisory committees to develop the program and determine its content. In each diocese, directors of the four Catholic Charities agencies accepted the responsibility of organizing the local events.

Each diocesan event took on a style of its own. In Covington and Owensboro, various individuals made presentations in addition to that of the Conference staff. In Louisville and Lexington, Conference staff were the primary presenters. In Covington, Bishop Roger Foys sent letters of invitation to legislators. In the other dioceses, staff of Catholic Charities agencies invited legislators and encouraged constituents to do so also.

Planners scheduled the events at various times. Some began at mid-morning on Saturdays, others took place on weeknights. Refreshments fit the schedule and included Danish and donuts, crudités, box lunches and even a full course buffet dinner at one site.

At all the events, conference staff presented an overview of the seven principles of Catholic social doctrine and described how issues linked to these principles are organized around four moral priorities: Protecting Human Life, Promoting Family Life, Pursuing Social Justice, and Practicing Global Solidarity.

It took a lot of planning and consumed more diocesan staff time than anticipated. A special thanks goes to the Catholic Charities Directors, Steve Bogus, Dick Murphy, Bill Jones, and Ruslyn Case-Compton. The following information comes from reports of these directors or their staff to the Conference.

The Conference does not have the names of every staff person who made this a success, but we certainly thank all of them. Here are those whose names we do know: Mark Bouchard, Sr. Mary Schmuck, R.S.M., and Carrie Berend.

Owensboro organized a Diocesan planning team which consisted of: Richard Murphy, Committee Chair, Luis Aju, Jose Gallegos, Patty Gutierrez, Darrell Howard, Jim Mattingly, Bishop John McRaith, Fr. Richard Meredith, Marianne Potina, Elaine Robertson, Fr. Brian Roby, Fr. John Vaughan, and Paul Witte.

There were also planning teams for each of the sites where sessions would take place. Members of the Paducah team included Dave Krueger, Committee Chair & Moderator for the event, Patty Corts, Richard Murphy, Mariane Potina, Irene Reising, Fr. Brian Roby, and Mike and Lorna Roper.

The Bowling Green team members were Paul Witte, Committee Chair, Jose Gallegos, John McAllister, Dennis Meffert, Richard Murphy, Carl Schmidt, and Eric Smith. Allen Simpson served as the Moderator for the event.

The team for the Owensboro event consisted of Jim Mattingly, Committee Chair, Luis Aju, Patty Gutierrez, Darrell Howard, Karen Jarboe, Richard Murphy, Carol Schlacter. Kevin Kauffeld served as the Moderator for the event in Owensboro.

There are others to thank. From the Archdiocese of Louisville we thank Bart Weigel, Mark Bouchard, Sister Marilyn Schatz, Dean Sears, Teri Pierce, Clarissa Yates, Melba Kinderwatter, Normaline Skees, Brenda Skees, Judy Banks, Sister Marina Gibbons, and William Huston, President of St. Catharine College. We also appreciate several others who helped provide food from the Parishes in the Southern KY Missions.

From Lexington we want to thank Melissa Holland of Pax Christi and Sister Mary Jane Kreidler, as well as others who volunteered and provided refreshments at Our Lady of the Mountains in Stanton.

In Covington and Owensboro there were persons who made special presentations regarding legislation we hoped to see filed during the General Assembly meeting. We want to thank Dr. Marshall E. Prunty, Mr. Jim Mattingly, Dr. Cindy Bornander, Ms. Tayna Fogle, Rev. Ron Ketteler, and Mr. Bill Jones. Also Mrs. Patty Gutierrez presented information on comprehensive immigration reform and Ms. Mary Richie from the Women's Crisis Center Human Trafficking Coalition in northern Kentucky offered a special presentation about her work on human trafficking and its victims.

Attendance at the ten events more than doubled the number of those who have traveled to Frankfort in the past. Organizers reported a total of 342 persons present: 235, Louisville (four events); 191, Owensboro (three events); 81, Covington (one event; and 26, Lexington (two events).

We deeply appreciate the presence of the following eight State Senators and 26 State Representatives: Senators David Boswell, Perry Clark, Alice Forgy Kerr, Dan Seum, Dorsey Ridley, John Schickel, Tim Shaughnessy and Katie Kratz Stine; Representatives Tom Burch, Mike Cherry, Larry Clark, Ron Crimm, Jim DeCesare, C. B. Embry, Bill Farmer, Joseph Fischer, David Floyd, Jim Glenn, Mike Harmon, Richard Henderson, Jimmy Higdon, Joni Jenkins, Martha Jane King, Mary Lou Marzian, Jody Richards, Sal Santoro, Arnold Simpson, Wilson Stone, Tommy Thompson, Jim Wayne, Alicia Webb-Edgington, Addia Wuchner and Brent Yonts

In Bowling Green candidates seeking the Senate seat vacated by now Congressman Brett Guthrie, Jay Marshall Hughes and Mike Reynolds, were present. Reynolds won that election and is now a State Senator. We are grateful to all who offer themselves for public service in Kentucky's General Assembly.

Help for Human Trafficking Victims Available

By Marissa Castellanos

Human trafficking is a violation of a person's civil rights, of their human dignity. It is modern slavery in our midst and the exploitation of people for the purposes of commercial sex or labor through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

The U. S. Department of State estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked internationally each year. Of this number, experts estimate 14,000 to 17,000 are trafficked into the United States each year. (Source: U.S. State Dept.). This does not include the number of victims who are already living in the U.S., many of whom are native born citizens. The U.S. is both a consumer of trafficking services as well as a front-runner in fighting against this social evil.

In the statement "On Human Trafficking," issued by the Committee on Migration for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, there is the sober reminder that "survivors of human trafficking are commonly linked by poverty and lack of opportunity. They are also connected by their desperation and their perception of migration as an accessible escape route. Often they seek to escape life in an oppressive slum, with the hope of finding opportunity and a brighter future elsewhere."

The Second Vatican Council, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, the Bishops of Mexico and the U.S. Bishops have all issued statements calling attention to this dreadful practice that is an affront to human dignity.

In "Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, the Catholic bishops of the United States and Mexico called upon their respective governments to work together to apprehend traffickers and destroy trafficking networks: "Both governments must vigilantly seek to end trafficking in human persons. . . . Together, both governments should more effectively share information on trafficking operations and should engage in joint action to apprehend and prosecute traffickers."

Both the federal law called the Trafficking Victims Protection Act and legislation passed by the Kentucky General Assembly and signed by former governor, Ernie Fletcher, have helped by focusing awareness on this tragic situation.

Kentucky is not immune to human trafficking. Since March 2008 the KY Rescue and Restore Victims of Human Trafficking Program identified at least 17 cases of human trafficking. People working in this field estimate that there are many more cases of human trafficking in Kentucky.

A Roma child finds herself on the side of a road in northern Italy, ironically wearing a shirt that proclaims, "Outsider." Her family, which fled the ethnic turmoil in Bosnia, is always on the move. Poverty, discrimination, and social customs combine to make Roma children vulnerable to trafficking.



Kay Chernush for the U.S. State Department

Knowing about human trafficking is one of the most effective means of fighting its presence. Establishing human trafficking task forces in communities throughout Kentucky is vital to increasing local awareness of this problem.

In Kentucky the anti-human trafficking effort began with one task force in Lexington, and grew to include task forces in Louisville and Covington. Now there are additional task forces in Bowling Green, Somerset, and Campbellsville. All of these task forces convene community members to talk about how human trafficking can best be combated in that community. If we had these task forces in every community throughout Kentucky, we could identify and help more victims.

Catholic Charities of Louisville, along with many valuable community partners, is in the forefront of the effort to eliminate human trafficking in Kentucky.

Funded by a grant from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and working with the Migration and Refugee Services Department of the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the KY Rescue and Restore Coalition is available statewide to conduct educational trainings about human trafficking and directly serve trafficking victims.

In response to a suspected case of human trafficking, KY Rescue and Restore may provide a screening and begin the process of offering services to these survivors whose freedom had been taken from them. Trafficking victims have various needs: health care, legal services, translation, counseling, English as a Second Language classes, housing, and more. These services are all available through the KY Rescue and Restore Program. Over time, these survivors rebuild their lives and begin to dream again.

There are multiple ways to get involved in the effort to abolish modern-day slavery in Kentucky. First, be a conscious consumer. Fair trade products help to assure us that slave labor was not used in the production and manufacturing of what we wear, what we eat, and in general what we buy.

Second, we need to pay attention to what's going on in our neighborhoods and local businesses. Do you see signs of sex or labor trafficking? Respond. Call the police, Catholic Charities of Louisville, or the National Human Trafficking Hotline (1-888-3737-888). Report what you've seen.

Third, post materials about human trafficking in your business/community. You never know when a victim may pass by and see it.

Finally, make sure you and your community are educated on the issue. You may set up a local training, attend a task force meeting, or volunteer for a coalition partner in your community.

For more information, to request a training workshop, or to find out about other opportunities to get involved in the fight against human trafficking contact: Marissa Castellanos, mcastellanos@archlou.org, 502.974.4947.

Catholic Mobilizing Network To End the Use of the Death Penalty

By Karen Clifton
Chair, Steering Committee

"It's about summoning people, educating them and moving people to action." These are the words of Sister Helen Prejean who challenged lay Catholics to join the *Bishop's Campaign to End the Use of the Death Penalty* and mobilize it. The *Catholic Mobilizing Network* was launched with the encouragement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on January 25, 2009 at the close of the *National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty's* annual conference in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The Network's goal is to offer education on the death penalty to the 67 million Catholics in the United States and to mobilize them to act to end the use of the death penalty.

Besides collaborating with the U.S. Catholic Conference they are networking with the many existing organizations tirelessly striving to eliminate the death penalty.

Great work is being done by many as the Network continues to organize to create teaching tools intended to be shared among us all in an effort to get Catholics to participate in this dignity of life challenge.

Catholic teaching opposes the use of the death penalty. Most Catholics have not thought about the death penalty



Karen Clifton, speaking at a press conference at the close of the annual meeting of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, announces a new Catholic effort to end the use of the death penalty in the U. S. Seated to her left are John Carr with the U. S. Bishops Conference and Sr. Helen Prejean, author of the book, *Dead Man Walking*.

deeply since it does not affect them. To have a consistent ethic of life, we need to deliberate and come to understand that all life is precious to God, even those guilty of heinous crimes. As Catholics we are called to be consistently Pro-Life.

In response to this call, materials are being developed for Catholic education programs, youth groups, parish organizations and institutes of higher learning. The *Franciscan Action Network* is developing an eight week course to take parishioners through the learning process. Catholic training workshops have been developed in collaboration with *Equal Justice USA* to provide one hour formats to educate individuals in parishes and at conferences.

State Catholic Conferences are working with this Network to share their films, articles and teaching materials so they can be utilized by states without conferences or developed death penalty teaching materials. The one act play, created from Sister Helen Prejean's best selling book, *Dead Man Walking* has been posted on the website www.catholicsmobilizing.org. Both the one act play and study guide can be downloaded free of charge. The Network also has a Facebook page.

More materials are needed for junior high students and up. You are needed. You are welcome to come and learn, contribute your knowledge, time and skill to our website, Facebook and action efforts to promote a consistent ethic of life and eliminate the death penalty.

During this formative time of the *Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty* all efforts have been voluntary and in collaboration with the *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*.

Concerned Catholics have provided insight, shared talents and provided the vision necessary to create a viable organization which will work toward raising the consciousness of all Catholics to see the ultimate meaning of Jesus' message of compassionate love for all life from the moment of conception to natural death.

Please Join Us! Visit www.catholicsmobilizing.org and learn how we can work together to defend human life.

State Death Penalty Coalition Hires Director of Education and Advocacy

The Kentucky Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty (KCADP) has stepped up its efforts to end the use of the death penalty in Kentucky. The Catholic Conference of Kentucky is one of its organizational members and has worked closely with the group during its 20-year history.

Last January its board approved a plan to raise \$240,000 to enable the group to hire a full time director of education and advocacy. With much of that money in hand or pledged, the Coalition hired Don Vish, a retired attorney, this past

January. Vish has already engaged law school interns from the Brandeis School of Law at the University of Louisville and the Chase College of Law at Northern Kentucky University to help the Coalition research issues related to capital sentencing in Kentucky.

Vish has worked closely with community and faith-based organizations throughout his career and will bring that experience to his efforts to organize opposition to the use of the death penalty by Kentucky.

The Coalition rejoices in the past efforts of the Catholic community to end the death penalty in Kentucky and welcomes this new effort of the *Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty* and has already spoken to

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A Matter of Safety for Non-Public School Students

By Harry Borders

The Kentucky General Assembly enacted a transportation program in 1994 that allows students in non-public schools to ride buses safely to and from school with the use of state and county general funds.

As far back as the late 1930's county fiscal courts had contracted with public school officials to provide the busing service then used by primarily Catholic students. The counties continued to provide this transportation service until a lawsuit challenged the use of county general funds for this purpose.

Kentucky's constitution prohibits any funds raised for educational purposes to be used by, or in aid of, any church, sectarian or denominational school. This obviously anti-Catholic amendment was added to the Constitution in 1891 and has yet to be removed.

The amendment's phrase, "for educational purposes," is the basis for the court's finding that busing non-public school students is a proper use of state and county general fund dollars because these funds are not raised specifically for public education.

It is clear that the Kentucky Supreme Court has adopted the following logical reasoning: (1) state tax revenues can be spent only to support public education; (2) the transportation of school students is a matter of health and safety, not education; (3) thus, expenditures from the general fund, rather than from educational funds, can be appropriated for busing non-public school students.

As a result of the Kentucky Supreme Court's decision we approached the legislature in 1994 to seek legislation that



Harry Borders
Director, KLEA

would allow us to add state dollars to a very worthy program funded at that time by counties only.

The first appropriation in 1994 was for \$2 million and 17 counties participated. At that time Jefferson County, with the highest student population in the state and the greatest number of private schools, was involved in a lawsuit that prohibited participation.

The 17 participating counties were reimbursed \$1.5 million for the first year of the program. It was immediately clear that the subsidy would be underfunded as soon as Jefferson County and others came on board. In 1995 two additional counties participated, including Jefferson County which alone received \$455,000, or about one quarter of the total funding.

Over the next few years funding remained at \$2 million in spite of our best efforts to convince lawmakers to increase the amount.

In the meantime new counties began to participate. Today, 22 counties are helping to transport non-public school students safely between their homes and schools.

The last bus subsidy increase was in 2004 for \$450,000. Our total working fund is currently \$2,950,000, a \$950,000 increase over 15 years.

The State Transportation Cabinet, which administers the busing program, estimates that it needs \$5 million per year to keep the program sound. This increase must come from the legislature since counties cannot begin to shoulder this cost alone.

The 22 participating counties serve approximately 100 schools with a ridership in excess of 8,000 students. Staff at one small school recently stated that were it not for the bus subsidy program, they most likely would have to close.

It is that important to them. It is that important to all of us.

Coalition Welcomes Catholic Campaign

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Karen Clifton about the possibility of training sessions for Catholics in Kentucky in each of the dioceses before and/or after next year's annual meeting of the National Coalition. That meeting will be held at the Seelbach in Louisville, Kentucky from January 14 through January 17, 2010.

But pastoral leaders in Catholic parishes need not wait until next January to inform parishioners about the death penalty. In fact, by then, Kentucky will most likely have executed as many as three more prisoners.

KCADP will provide a speaker

during a Minute for Mission at a worship service or faith education programs.

This is a 15-minute opportunity to listen, to consider and to dialogue about the death penalty and its consequences.

This speaker will a) share a personal story from someone facing execution; b) offer scripture about the death penalty; c) share what the Kentucky law is; and d) provide concrete action steps for people of faith.

To schedule a speaker for Minute for Mission contact KCADP at kcadp@earthlink.net or call Dawn Jenkins at 502-657-9026.

Our Sincere Apology

In the last issue we announced the receipt of a grant to help engage parishes in developing health and wellness ministries. After many concerted attempts to provide for the necessary training, our efforts were unsuccessful. Until January the Conference had only one staff person to work on this, ably assisted by Sr. Mary Schmuck, R.S.M. and Michelle Herberger who volunteered to take on this task in addition to their other obligations.

After assurances by the funder that returning the grant, of which no funds had been expended, would not impact on our ability to apply in the future, the grant was returned.

The Conference will continue to seek ways to promote access to healthcare for all and to urge Catholics in Kentucky to advocate on behalf of those without access.

We apologize to any who were inconvenienced by this decision.

Make Courageous Choices in Support of Life

Early this year, Robert P. George and Christopher Tollefsen published *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life*. Professor George is a professor of jurisprudence and director of the James Madison Program in American Ideals and Institutions at Princeton University. Professor Tollefsen is an associate professor and director of the graduate program in philosophy at the University of South Carolina.

In *Embryo: A Defense of Human Life* (2008) the authors systematically craft a compelling moral case against embryonic stem cell research on moral and philosophical grounds. Their work constructively analyzes the political, technological, and cultural ramifications of embryonic stem cell research on the basis of core public moral values. In the end, George and Tollefsen conclude “that any scientific research conducted on embryonic humans, and destructive of their life or health, is wrong, immoral, unjust.”

In particular, Chapter 4, “Moral Philosophy and the Early Human Being,” sketches a classic natural law theory of ethics within the framework of essential human goods and rights.

Robert P. George’s own scholarship on natural law methodology has been influential in the ongoing discussion of the relationship of a natural law approach to public policy and jurisprudence. Without doubt, from an historical perspective, the concept of “natural law” stands as a central component of “the Western tradition of thought about morality, politics, and law.”

A scholarly paper on the theme of natural law, the Constitution, and judicial review appears in his *The Clash of Orthodoxies: Law, Religion, and Morality in Crisis* (2001). The article opens with a description of elements common to various versions of natural law theories.

First, there is a shared supposition that positive law (humanly enacted laws, e.g. civil laws) can be assessed as “morally good or evil—just or unjust—depending on its conformity to standards of a ‘natural law,’ (viz., moral law) that is no mere human creation.”

Secondly, the natural moral law is conceived of as “a ‘higher law’ that is in principle accessible to human reason and not dependent on (although entirely compatible with and, indeed, illumined by) divine revelation.”

Proponents of natural law ethics, then, contend that the founding documents of the United States echo such a natural law orientation. The Declaration of Independence, for example, refers to the “unalienable rights” of citizens to “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” as endowments derived from “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.”

Robert P. George contributed “Law and Moral Purpose” to the January 2008 issue of the journal *First Things*. This concise summary of the relationship of law and morality sums up the substance of an ethic protective of human dignity and rights. Thus the author argues: “Our foundational principle of the profound, inherent, and equal dignity of every human being demands that all members of the human family be respected and protected irrespective not only of race, sex, and ethnicity but also of age, size, location, stage of development and condition of dependency. To exclude anyone from the law’s protection is to treat him unjustly.”

The Web site of the Pro-Life Activities Committee of the U. S. Catholic Conference of Bishops carries Professor George’s article



Rev. Ronald Ketteler

“Political Action and Legal Reform in *Evangelium Vitae*.” Developing the thought of Pope John Paul II in the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* (“The Gospel of Life,” 1995), Professor George lays an ethical foundation for building a “culture of life” through intellectual and political engagement.

According to Professor George, a natural law approach categorically rejects any conflation of the equal protection in the civil law of the fundamental right to life of “the unborn child or every other member of the human family” with a religiously sectarian belief. On the contrary, equal protection of vulnerable human beings in public policy is rooted in “a principle of natural law—an objective moral truth, recognizable in the light of natural reason by all men and women of good will.”

The thought of Robert P. George on natural law theory is consonant with the moral analysis of life issues found in Church documents on questions such as abortion, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research.

Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae* emphatically states that the Gospel of life “has a profound and pervasive echo in the heart of every person—believer and non-believer alike.” (EV n. 2)

Living the Gospel of Life, published in 1998 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States, applied the doctrinal teaching of *Evangelium Vitae* on the sanctity of human life to the moral and political challenges faced by Catholics on the national level. That statement emphasized that Catholic beliefs about the sanctity of human life are “not merely a Catholic doctrine but part of humanity’s global heritage and our nation’s founding principle.” (LGL n. 24) In other words, opposition to abortion as immoral is a conviction held by many others on humanist and ethical grounds.

In January 2008, the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky published “Reverence for Life: Conscience and Faithful Citizenship,” a pastoral letter “on the fundamental human rights issue of our day—the right to life of the unborn.”

Their pastoral letter places a primacy on conscience formation and the correlative moral duties of Catholics as citizens. It reaffirms the position taken by the national body of bishops in their 1989 “Resolution on Abortion”: “At this particular time, abortion has become the fundamental human rights issue.”

“Reverence for Life: Conscience and Faithful Citizenship” explains the moral assumptions that call for a prophetic presence of the Church in the political sphere: “Consistent with our nation’s legal tradition we hold that all human laws must be measured against the natural law engraved in our hearts by the Creator. Our religious beliefs affirm basic human rights and obligations that are essential to the fabric of our social life. In particular, respect for human life is numbered among those basic values that underpin the very foundation of civilization. What we profess in defense of the sacredness of unborn human life harmonizes with our historic legal tradition founded on the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Abortion on demand does not.”

The social doctrine of the Church not only advocates justice concerning economic and political rights but also encompasses the defense of fundamental human life issues “such as abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and the violence of war.”

The *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2004) summarizes Church teaching on the relationship of political authority to the moral law. Several sections of the *Compendium* spell out the essentials of that teaching:

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Make Courageous Choices in Support of Life

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1) Section 396 of the *Compendium* notes that political authority “must be guided by the moral law” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 2235).

2) Section 397 sets forth a central tenet on authority as a moral force: “Authority must recognize, respect and promote human and moral values. These are innate and ‘flow from the very truth of the human being and express and safeguard the dignity of the person; values which no individual, no majority and no state ever create, modify or destroy’ [EV n.71]. These values do not have their foundation in provisional and changeable ‘majority opinions, but must simply be recognized, respected and promoted as elements of an objective moral law, the natural law written in the human heart (cf. Rom 2:15), and as the normative point of reference for civil law itself’ (EV n.70; *Pacem in Terris* nn. 46-52; nn 80 ff.), ...”

3) Section 398 treats the nature of just laws: “Authority must enact just laws, that is, laws that correspond to the dignity of the human person and to what is required by right reason. ...”

4) Section 399 speaks of conscientious objection to immoral laws by identifying “a grave duty in conscience not to cooperate, not even formally, in practices which, although permitted by civil legislation, are contrary to the Law of God.”

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms that “[t]he inalienable right to life of every human individual is a constitutive element of civil society and its legislation.” (CCC n. 2273)

In 2002, the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith issued “A Doctrinal Note: The Participation of Catholics in Political Life.” In regard to fundamental ethical demands incumbent on the consciences of Catholics, the Congregation stated that such obligations do not entail “confessional values per se, because such ethical precepts are rooted in human nature itself and belong to the natural moral law.” In addition, the defense of fundamental ethical requirements does not presuppose “the profession of Christian faith, although the Church’s teaching confirms and defends them always

and everywhere as part of her service to the truth about man and about the common good of civil society.” (DN n. 5)

In this regard, “Reverence for Life: Conscience and Faithful Citizenship” reaffirms an insight from “Faithful for Life: A Moral Reflection,” a 1995 statement of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

“Faithful for Life” emphatically stresses that Catholics are citizens who “share the right—indeed, the duty—of all citizens to insist that the laws and policies of the United States be faithful to our founders’ conviction that the foremost ‘unalienable right’ conferred by our Creator on all of us is life itself.”

The witness of the bishops in their office of pastoral teachers is unequivocal: “As bishops, as Catholics, as citizens, we speak against the injustice of destroying children by abortion and eliminating elderly or impaired people by euthanasia.” Moreover, sanctioning these evils by law is “the ultimate disgrace.”

The biblical ethic to protect the poor, the powerless, and the defenseless in our midst enjoins a special obligation on public leaders “to make courageous choices in support of life, especially through legislative measures (*Evangelium Vitae* n. 90)—measures that protect the unborn, the elderly, and the enfeebled who are so mortally threatened today.”

May They Rest in Peace

Opportunities For Life lost two employees in 2008 through death: Sherry Baker and Candy Penland.

Sherry died on March 13 after a long illness with which she suffered for years. She was a woman of strong faith and her presence at the office brightened all our lives.

Candy, who was hired to replace Sherry, died unexpectedly on December 15 after a brief illness that no one considered terminal. She was also a woman deeply committed to her faith.

Both gave many hours of volunteer service to their respective church communities. And each one leaves behind a loving husband, several children and many dedicated friends.

We deeply appreciated their dedication to the work of Opportunities For Life and their concern for its volunteers and for those who used the hotline numbers.

Rev. Ron Ketteler serves as a priest of the diocese of Covington and is the Director of Ecumenism for the Diocese.



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