

Searching for the Common Good

## *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship - Introductory Note*

Over the past 35 years the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops published a document intended to help form consciences in the Catholic community with regard to Catholic involvement in civic life. For the first time in 2007 this document was approved by the entire body of bishops, rather than its Administrative Committee. An overwhelming number of bishops voted to publish the 2007 document: 214 — 4.

This year, rather than issuing a new teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics, as has been the practice in the past, the bishops' Administrative Committee has appended an important new introductory note.

This new note does highlight new areas of concern that threaten to undermine the ability of Catholics to practice their faith: the danger of restrictions on our religious liberty in recent legislation and regulations, as well as the loss of conscience protection for various health care practitioners—doctors, nurses, pharmacists and others.

The U. S. Bishops are hopeful that *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* with the new introductory note will receive wider circulation and awareness than in the past. Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) found that only 16 percent of adult American Catholics could recall hearing of the document. Fewer than one-fourth of those who heard of it had read it.

Far fewer were influenced by it when they voted. Less than one in ten persons who attended Mass weekly and who were aware of the text responded that it had a "major influence" on their vote in the 2008 cycle.

Over the next several months, which lead up to elections in November 2012, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky will focus on aspects of this important document on our website, in this newsletter, and in other forms of communication in order to help Catholic voters bring a well-formed conscience to the ballot box at that time.

For that reason, we publish the text of the introductory note in this issue of WITNESS. The complete text of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and a wealth of resources about it is found here: <http://tinyurl.com/3b9phuj>.

*"In this coming election and beyond, we urge leaders and all Catholics to share the message of faithful citizenship and to use this document in forming their own consciences...."*



**T**he Catholic Bishops of the United States are pleased to propose to our people

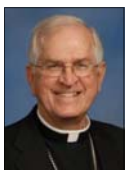
*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics. This statement, overwhelmingly adopted by the body of bishops in 2007, represents the continuing teaching of our Bishops' Conference and our guidance for Catholics in the exercise of their rights and duties as participants in our democracy. We urge our Catholic pastors and people to continue to use this important statement to help them form their consciences, to contribute to civil and respectful public dialogue, and to shape their choices in the coming election in the light of

Catholic teaching.

The statement lifts up our dual heritage as both faithful Catholics and American citizens. We are members of a community of faith with a long tradition of teaching and action on human life, and dignity, marriage and family, justice and peace, care for creation, and the common good. As Americans, we are also blessed with religious liberty which safeguards our right to bring our principles and moral convictions into the public arena. These Constitutional freedoms need to be both exercised and protected, as some seek to mute the voices or limit the freedoms of religious believers and religious institutions. Catholics have the same rights and duties as others to participate fully in public life. The Church through its institutions must be free to carry out its mission and con-

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## Bringing the Catholic Voice to the Public Square

By Rev. Patrick Delahanty



**F**ALL is almost gone. Thanksgiving is past and the Christmas holiday draws near. Soon our legislators will head back to Frankfort, this time for the “long” session, 60 days of opportunity to create public policies that benefit the common good and reflect the teaching of Jesus, or 60 days to cater to special interests and ignore the “cry of the poor” as did the ancient Kings of Israel. Or 60 days to do a little of both.

How much good and how much harm comes out of any legislative session depends, to some extent, on our own actions. Do we engage in the process, as our church leaders encourage us to do, or do we “sit this one out” and hope someone else does the work.?

### Catholics @ the Capitol

To help the Catholic community be “Faithful Citizens” the Conference is sponsoring Catholics @ the Capitol (C@C) in Frankfort on February 6 and 7, 2012. The event takes place at the Capital Plaza Hotel, 405 Wilkerson Boulevard in downtown Frankfort.

A special room rate of \$86 plus tax for a single or double occupancy room is available. Call 502.227.5100 to reserve a room at this rate by mentioning the C@C event.

The fee for the two-day event is \$40. This fee includes materials, a banquet on Monday and a continental breakfast on Tuesday.

On Monday evening Bishop Ronald Gainer of Lexington will celebrate Mass and Fr. Larry Snyder, President of Catholic Charities USA, will deliver a keynote address on poverty issues.

On Tuesday, participants will head to the Capitol and meet with their State Senators and State Representatives about three or four of our highest priority legislative issues.

With more than 300 parishes and missions in Kentucky, it would be a wonderful demonstration of faithful citizenship were each of them to send at least one member to this event. Early planning to encourage attendance and finding ways to help defray costs could lead to our most successful C@C Frankfort event. Last year more than 800 participants took part in C@C at diocesan events statewide. This provides a great pool of inter-

ested persons from which to draw.

Registration information and a more detailed agenda is available on our website.

### Faithful Citizens Advocacy List

The Faithful Citizens Advocacy list is another important tool available to the Catholic community for use in persuading lawmakers and other government leaders to implement policies that uphold the right to life, respect human dignity, and promote the common good. To be even more effective, this list needs to grow significantly.

There are more than 400,000 Catholics in Kentucky, nearly one-tenth of the total population. And, guess what, not all of them have signed up to become Faithful Citizens.

And so, we encourage you— pastors, educators, lay leaders and others— to find at least five new persons who agree to add their names to the Faithful Citizen list and take action on important public policy matters.

Anytime is a good time to add names, but it strikes us that the *Roe v. Wade* anniversary in January of each year is a time when the Catholic community is especially conscious of matters regarding human life and dignity.

Parish bulletin announcements or pulpit announcements about the list are helpful. Including sign-up opportunities online during regular parish events also yield positive results. CCK staff is certainly available to help you develop your own ideas about increasing participation in this important ministry.

### A Website for the 21st Century

The Catholic Conference has updated its website, <http://www.ccky.org>. What was a wonderful 20th century site is an excellent 21st century site. It provides for more interaction between the Conference and those who visit the site, while still hosting our special publications and other documents important to the work of the Conference.

CCK also urges visitors to use the site to sign up to become Faithful Citizens and to check back frequently for new materials.

The new site allows staff to keep visitors updated about topics of special interest to Kentucky Catholics by blogging regularly on issues of public policy importance.

We have also joined many other Catholic conferences in providing a Facebook page. Use this link to visit the page and become a Catholic Conference Friend: <http://tinyurl.com/3ewwxms>. Thanks. We hope to see you there. And please follow us on Twitter and watch our YouTube channel.

# *It's the Journey and the Destination*

By Leisa Schulz

**A**s catechists, we are called to form children and young people in the areas of message, worship, moral formation, prayer, community, and service. We know our destination, and we have many paths to reach it. The catechumenal model of catechesis enhances our repertoire of strategies and challenges us to practice what we preach regarding the ongoing process of faith formation.



## **Message**

The message of our faith is conveyed through our traditions and scriptures. Our age-appropriate religious education guidelines articulate what learners should know about the Catholic faith, and we have many wonderful resources such as religion textbooks that can deliver that information. Traditional school and parish religious education models are effective; however, the liturgical year and ongoing study of the scriptures in small communities and intergenerational groups provide a venue for us to practice faith formation as an ongoing year-round process centered in the family and in the parish. We are called to explore and devise models that promote catechesis as an ongoing process.

## **Worship**

Worship gives everyone the opportunity to come to full and active participation in the faith. We celebrate the Paschal Mystery at Sunday liturgy, and Catholic school students gather at other times to worship together. Parish religious education and Catholic school students come together to celebrate the sacraments of initiation at worship. It is imperative that the entire community witnesses and celebrates the initiation of these members into the faith. We are called to be one community learning and growing together.

## **Moral Formation**

The gospel calls us to live out its message in our daily lives. We are challenged to transform ourselves from the inside out. The change begins within us and emanates out to the entire community. As catechists, we teach children and young people that it is important to not only know the mes-

sage of our faith but also to proclaim and live out that message in our daily lives.

## **Prayer**

Prayer gives us the strength to live and carry out the gospel. As catechists, we teach children and young people to pray in the tradition of the "Our Father," and we also share spontaneous prayer. The catechumenal model calls us to an attitude of prayer, reflection, and contemplation.

## **Community**

We are called to live out our faith in many communities. We have parish communities, school communities, local communities, and world communities. By living in community we learn to get along with one another, practice the art of forgiveness and reconciliation, and live out a spirit of simplicity. Our school and parish religious education communities teach children and young people to recognize and value the diversity among us. The catechumenal model challenges us not to wait for diversity to come to us. We are called to seek out greater and greater diversity in a spirit of welcome and inclusion.

## **Service**

Presence is required to serve. We are called to go beyond the boundaries of self and parish to serve those in need, and

***In Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the bishops of the United States remind us: "In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation" (no. 13).***

we are called to provide what they need not what we want to give. The gospel and catechumenal model asks us to delve deeper into what the gospel is compelling us to do. Often that requires us to explore the reasons behind the needs, and we are challenged to confront complex and complicated societal conditions.

Catechesis is challenging. We have identified what we want catechesis to do, and we are constantly striving to realize these tasks in ways that model the ever-changing and ongoing process that is faith formation. The catechumenal model reminds us that both the destination and journey are important.

# The Natural Moral Law and Democratic Freedom

By Rev. Ronald M. Ketteler

**A**lready at mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuit Father John Courtney Murray (1904-1967) expressed concern about the deteriorating condition of discourse in the political and cultural orders. The civic culture was signaling that growing numbers of public thinkers “had come to doubt the fundamental truths on which this nation was founded.” Public argument in a democracy cannot be carried out without “some commonly held convictions about the nature and foundations of social life.”



Rev. Ronald M. Ketteler

To remedy the ensuing impoverishment of public discourse the noted Jesuit theologian called for recapturing “the vitality of the natural law tradition for an American public philosophy.”

In retrospect, Father Murray was prescient in his highly influential *We Hold These Truths* (1960). For, more than five decades ago, this seminal thinker in Catholic theology responded to the eclipse of the natural law doctrine in his article, “The Doctrine Lives: The Eternal Return of the Natural Law.”

A natural law methodology has played an important role in Catholic moral teaching as a source of moral wisdom, especially in modern times in Church social doctrine.

In this regard, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (2005) presents a summary of the teaching of the Church on the natural moral law and interrelated questions. In particular, Section 140 distills the core elements of that doctrine from the tradition on the nature of the natural moral law.

There is an inherent relationship that links the natural moral law with the exercise of human freedom. The natural law is universal in nature and, on account of that universality, it is a framework that grounds and integrates all rights and duties.

The *Compendium* synthesizes the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas on the moral law: “This light or this law has been given by God to creation. It consists in the participation in his eternal law, which is identified with God himself. (ST I-II, q. 91, a. 2, c ...) This law is called ‘natural’ because the reason that promulgates it is proper to human nature. It is universal; it extends to all people insofar as it is established by reason. ...”

Referring to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC n.

1955), the *Compendium* highlights several constitutive elements of the concept of natural law: “In its principal precepts, the divine and natural law is presented in the Decalogue and indicates the primary and essential norms regulating moral life. (CCC n. 1955) Its central focus is the act of aspiring and submitting to God, the source and judge of everything that is good, and also the act of seeing others as equal to oneself. The natural law expresses the dignity of the person and lays the foundations of the person’s fundamental duties (CCC n. 1956).”

Several years ago, a study of the Catholic teaching on the natural law as a universal ethic had been assigned to the Vatican’s International Theological Commission (ITC). The Pontifical International Theological Commission released “In Search of a Universal Ethics: A New Look at Natural Law” in June 2009.

On October 5, 2007, during the preparatory phase of that document, Pope Benedict XVI delivered an address, “The Primacy of the Natural Moral Law,” to the members of the Commission at its annual plenary meeting.

The Holy Father’s speech stressed the indispensability of the natural law for the civil and social orders. The troublesome unmooring of civic polity from ethics in modern democratic societies represented an unprecedented challenge to the natural law tradition.

## Natural Law: a ‘Higher Law’

The natural law, in contradistinction to positive law or humanly enacted law, is regarded as a ‘higher law.’ Hence, it serves as a lens through which society can judge the rightness and justice of its civil laws, institutions, and policies.

Legal positivism, on the other hand, is an ideology that rejects accountability to ‘a higher law,’ i.e., the moral law. Consequently, morality is conflated with the civil law.

Pope Benedict XVI traced the roots of this escalating political and legal trend towards positivism to an ideology of “ethical relativism, which some see as one of the principal conditions for democracy since relativism is supposed to guarantee tolerance of a mutual respect for people.”

On his “Ignatius Insight” Web site (October 27, 2007), Jesuit Father James V. Schall, a political philosopher at Georgetown University, tersely and clearly summed up the implications of ethical relativism: “Nothing can go against the will of the majority, which is in itself whatever it decides. It can change from day to day. Its ‘truth’ is that there is no truth.”

According to the Holy Father, juridical positivism tends to validate a political and cultural state of affairs wherein “humanity or society or indeed the majority of citizens is be-

coming the ultimate source of civil law.”

However, such an argument, namely, that relativism serves as a guarantee for tolerance and mutual respect of citizens, is based on a false premise: “But, if this were so, the majority of the moment would become the ultimate source of law.” The search for power, then, tends to displace the search for the moral good.

### **Basic Human Rights At Stake**

Accordingly, Pope Benedict XVI called for the necessary grounding of civil law and policy in the moral law: “When the fundamental requirements of human dignity, of human life, of the family institution, of a fair social order, in other words, basic human rights, are at stake no law devised by human beings can subvert the law that the Creator engraved on the human heart without the indispensable foundations of society itself being dramatically affected.”

Without the moral law as a foundation of rights, respect for the inherent dignity of men and women cannot be adequately defended against “all ideological manipulation and every kind of arbitrary use or abuse by the stronger.”

At that plenary session of the ITC, the Holy Father noted that the doctrine of natural law fulfills two essential goals. First, the doctrine of natural law affirms that “the ethical content of the Christian faith does not constitute an imposition dictated to the human conscience from the outside but a norm inherent in human nature itself.”

Secondly, and correlatively, the foundations of natural law, a law which is “in itself accessible to any rational creature,” can set forth conditions for engaging in dialogue “with all people of good will and more generally, with civil and secular society.”

Pope Benedict XVI asserted: “True rationality is not guaranteed by the consensus of a large number but solely by the transparency of human reason to the creative Reason and by listening together to this Source of our rationality.”

Otherwise, when ethical relativism attacks the foundational principles of the natural moral law, it threatens basic human rights and also strikes at “the foundations of the democratic order itself.”

### **The Role of Reason and Faith**

In recent decades, Pope Benedict XVI has become a prophetic voice in the defense of religious and ethical values as the foundation of democracy. His earlier theological writings often confronted the issue.

An outstanding example of his critique of “the dictatorship of relativism” can be found in the Holy Father’s (then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) participation in an exchange with Jurgen Habermas. The conversation in that 2004 academic dialogue explored the role of reason and faith in a context of secularization. His paper, “That Which Holds the World Together” focused on the theme of “the pre-political moral foundations of a free state.”

The enactment of unjust laws by “majority principle” or “majority rule” is ethically and politically problematic for the defense of human dignity and rights. Unjust laws that deny human rights raise questions about the ethical foundations of the civil law. Whether “there is something that can never become law but always remains injustice” emerges as a neuralgic societal question.

In other words, issues arise as to whether there are human values and rights which by nature constitute an inalienable law, “something that is antecedent to every majority decision and must be respected by all such decisions.”

### **What Is Truth**

Pope Benedict XVI made a broader observation about the moral roots of civil law in “What is Truth? The Significance of Religious and Ethical Values in a Pluralistic Society” published in 1992. He discerned an in-built tension in modern society “between freedom as the existential form of democracy and the contents of democracy (i.e., law and the good) ...” The ongoing efforts “to discover the right form of democracy, and indeed of political life as a whole, are struggles to find the right balance in this tension.”

As a result, the concept of “truth” de facto “has moved into the zone of anti-democratic intolerance.” The implications of that shift are profound, for the “public good” is reduced to a private matter and the identification of the good of some groups is “not the truth of society as a whole.”

In one sense, the tying of modern democratic societies to “a relativism” that guarantees civil liberties (especially religious freedom) has been a positive historical development in the political sphere. Nevertheless, a significant question about the substance of liberty still remains unresolved: “Must there not be a nonrelativistic kernel in democracy too?” After all, democracy has the responsibility to uphold the inviolable human rights of its citizens, rights that constitute “the very substance of tolerance and freedom.”

Ethical truth is an essential component in authentic democratic life. In effect, the nub of the tension between a legitimate relativism needed for democratic co-existence and “the contents of democracy” revolves around setting limits to tolerance.

Pope Benedict XVI concluded that the purpose of government is not to establish “a freedom without contents.” Rather, if a state is to sustain viability and good order, there must exist “a minimum of truth, of knowledge of the good, that cannot be manipulated.”

*Ethical truth is an essential component in authentic democratic life.*

# New Note Introduces Faithful Citizenship Text

Continued from page 1.



tribute to the common good without being pressured to sacrifice fundamental teachings and moral principles.

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* is widely used to share Catholic teaching on the role of faith and conscience in political life.

Although it has at times been misused to present an incomplete or distorted view of the demands of faith in politics, this statement remains a faithful and challenging call to discipleship in the world of politics. It does not offer a voters guide, scorecard of issues, or direction on how to vote. It applies Catholic moral principles to a range of important issues and warns against misguided appeals to "conscience" to ignore fundamental moral claims, to reduce Catholic moral concerns to one or two matters, or to justify choices simply to advance partisan, ideological, or personal interests. It does not offer a quantitative listing of issues for equal consideration, but outlines and makes important distinctions among moral issues acknowledging that some involve the clear obligation to oppose intrinsic evils which can never be justified and that others require action to pursue justice and promote the common good. In short, it calls Catholics to form their consciences in the light of their Catholic faith and to bring our moral principles to the debate and decisions about candidates and issues.

The moral and human challenges outlined in the second half of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* remain pressing national issues. In particular, our Conference is focused on several current and fundamental problems, some involving opposition to intrinsic evils and others raising serious moral questions:

Continuing destruction of unborn children through abortion and other threats to the lives and dignity of others who are vulnerable, sick, or unwanted;

Renewed efforts to force Catholic ministries—in health care, education, and social services—to violate their consciences or stop serving those in need;

Intensifying efforts to redefine marriage and enact measures which undermine marriage as the permanent, faithful,

and fruitful union of one man and one woman and a fundamental moral and social institution essential to the common good;

An economic crisis which has devastated lives and livelihoods, increasing national and global unemployment, poverty, and hunger; increasing deficits and debt and the duty to respond in ways which protect those who are poor and vulnerable as well as future generations;

The failure to repair a broken immigration system with comprehensive measures that promote true respect for law, protect the human rights and dignity of immigrants and refugees, recognize their contributions to our nation, keep families together, and advance the common good;

Wars, terror, and violence which raise serious moral questions on the use of force and its human and moral costs in a dangerous world, particularly the absence of justice, security, and peace in the Holy Land and throughout the Middle East.

In this coming election and beyond, we urge leaders and all Catholics to share the message of faithful citizenship and to use this document in forming their own consciences, so we can act together to promote and protect human life and dignity, marriage and family, justice and peace in service to the common good. This kind of political responsibility is a requirement of our faith and our duty as citizens.

**Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan**, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

**Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo** Chairman, Committee on Pro-Life Activities

**Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl**, Chairman, Committee on Doctrine

**Archbishop José H. Gomez**, Chairman, Committee on Migration

**Bishop Stephen E. Blaire**, Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development

**Bishop Thomas J. Curry**, Chairman, Committee on Catholic Education

**Bishop Howard Hubbard**, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace

**Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades**, Chairman, Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth

**Bishop Jaime Soto**, Chairman, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church

**Bishop Gabino Zavala**, Chairman, Committee on Communications

# Annual Event Is a Time for Sharing Cultures

By Deacon Frank Villalobos

**O**n September 17, 2011 the Hispanic Community of the Archdiocese of Louisville shared its culture, custom, and tradition with the larger community of the archdiocese. Archbishop Joseph Kurtz and hundreds of others attended and had a wonderful experience at the celebration.

The event included traditional clothing, cultural artisan items and traditional folk dances from countries such as Cuba, Mexico, Peru, and Guatemala. There was plenty of authentic Mexican food available for all to enjoy.

The occasion provided a perfect opportunity to acknowledge our wonderful volunteers and congratulate those who completed the formation programs offered by the Office of Multicultural Ministry.

This annual coming together of our Hispanic community is a time for us to say “allow me to share with you a little about who I am, get to know me, and for you to share a little of yourself with me”.

Let’s face it, our neighborhoods, churches, towns and cities are changing. Twenty, thirty or forty years ago, most ethnic groups lived among themselves; they isolated themselves from the English speaking community.

We had neighborhoods where Italian, Polish, German, Irish, African American and Hispanic people lived among their own people. Today we can go into any neighborhood in our town or city and find people from Europe living next to people from Asia on their left and people from Latin America on their right. We have African Americans living next to Irish Americans, and there are German Americans living next to Cuban Americans, all forming a beautiful mosaic of people. They share their lives with one another and, whether they realize it or not, they are contributing to a unique, new culture, an American Culture.

There are many special events throughout the year that are celebrated by all of us, especially during the months of November and December.

The Hispanic community, in particular the Mexican community, celebrates the Feast of All Souls Day on November 2nd. If you happen to have a vibrant Hispanic community in your parish you might see an altar in the vestibule of your church. It might seem strange to you to see skulls, candles



Deacon Frank Villalobos and friends during a celebration of the culture and heritage of the Hispanic Community in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

and bread or even a bottle of tequila on that altar. Instead of assuming like many that we are celebrating Halloween, pick up a brochure or ask a fellow Hispanic parishioner the meaning of the altar. You’ll be surprised at the richness and the meaning behind this tradition. Besides gaining this knowledge, there is a greater

bonus, you have reached out to someone who might have felt unwelcomed and you’ve probably gained a new friend.

The month of December brings additional opportunities to share our culture and learn from each other. Many take advantage of the chance by joining in the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12th and attending the Mañanitas at 5:30 a.m., a serenade to Our Lady who appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec Indian on his way to Mass. Eventually, because of this event, Pope Pius XII would declare that Mary is Empress of all the Americas. So important is this feast that standing room only is normal for attendance at the evening Mass celebrations to which all are invited.

You can also attend the Posadas during the Christmas Season. This is a reenactment of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem and looking for an inn. They encounter many who will not open their doors. Finally, they find a place that lets them in and together they join in prayer and song following a traditional meal of tamales or mole. You might even get lucky and get a buñuelo and some atole.

Sharing our cultures and experiencing the culture of our new home is the process of enculturation. By living in our new adopted home, we learn the culture, we learn the language, and we begin to live in our new community instead of living in isolation. Let us work together to build a mosaic filled with different faces, shapes and most importantly colors.



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## Fr. Larry Snyder to Speak at Catholics @ the Capitol



Rev. Larry Snyder

**P**overty is a condition affecting millions of men, women, and children around the globe.

Archbishop Timothy Dolan, President of USCCB, recently pointed out how serious a situation this is in the U. S. in a letter to his brother bishops.

He noted that 46 million people in the country now live in poverty. And this condition is worsened because thousands of people remain unemployed. He urged his brother bishops and

other Catholic clergy nationwide to bring the issue of poverty into their homilies. He also underscored the need for educational and advocacy efforts on behalf of the poor and jobless.

The U. S. Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, and Catholic Charities USA are all concerned about the devastating impact this condition has on families and individuals here and abroad. They are addressing its impact on people through two major Church responses.

**Catholics Confront Global Poverty** is a campaign sponsored by the U. S. Bishops and Catholic Relief Services. Its primary goal is “to educate and mobilize one million Catholics in the United States to defend the *life and dignity* of people living in poverty throughout the world, and urge our nation to act in response to the *many faces of poverty*.” More on this campaign is found at <http://old.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/>.

Catholic Charities USA is conducting its **Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America**. The outcome of this campaign can have a deep impact on the lives of poor persons nationwide and living in Kentucky.

For that reason the Catholic Conference invited Fr. Larry Snyder, President of Catholic Charities USA, to our annual Catholics @ the Capitol event to deliver a keynote address on

February 6, 2012 during the meal that participants will share that evening.

The **Campaign to Reduce Poverty in America** has several goals which blend well with the work of the Catholic Conference and with the efforts of the four Catholic Charities’ agencies that deliver services in our four dioceses:

- To **reduce** poverty in the United States by 50 percent by the year 2020.
- To **call upon** the government to do more to serve those who are poor, and to improve public policies that strengthen and support families.
- To **educate** policymakers and the public about the struggles of those living in poverty and the good work of those who serve them in local communities.
- To **engage** those who are most impacted by government policies to be active participants in developing solutions to reducing poverty.
- To **work** with individuals and organizations across the country to address poverty in our country.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that in 2010 there were slightly more than 800,000 Kentuckians—19% of the total population—living in poverty in this state.

Imagine the impact it would have if the first goal above is met by 2020 and the number of poor persons in Kentucky is reduced by 400,000 persons.

Fr. Snyder has more than twenty years experience working on behalf of persons marginalized and vulnerable. On his blog he writes, “It is a tragedy that poverty continues to increase in the United States, one of the wealthiest nations in the world. We must no longer ignore the injustice of poverty and the extreme inequality in America. We must seize this opportunity to promote changes that promote human dignity and the common good.”

The Catholic Conference looks forward to his visit and we urge our readers to join us for Catholics @ the Capitol, February 6 and 7, 2012 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in downtown Frankfort. The event begins with advocacy training on Monday and concludes with legislative visits on Tuesday.