

Just News

News that brings you the Social Justice teachings of Jesus Christ

Legislative Agenda: **A Catholic View**

Patrick Trujillo

In the December issue of the People of God, Allen Sanchez, the Executive Director of the New Mexico Conference of Catholic Bishops (NMCCB), presents the Conference's legislative agenda for the 2011 legislative session. The purpose of the NMCCB is to promote the greater good of humankind by addressing issues of moral concern and social justice as seen through the eyes of the Catholic faith, and to encourage faithful Catholics to integrate their faith and morals into their public life. NMCCB lobbies on behalf of New Mexico's three bishops (Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan, Bishop Ricardo Ramirez of the Diocese of Las Cruces, and Bishop James S. Wall of the Diocese of Gallup) in Santa Fe during the legislative session on public policy issues that the bishops agree are of the utmost concern and importance from a Catholic perspective.

Some may be surprised by the NMCCB's role as a legislative lobbyist, but active engagement of Catholics in the

political process is an integral part of Church teaching. The "Call to Family, Community, and Participation" is one of the tenets of Catholic social teaching and states that

The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. Marriage and the family are the central social institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Because Catholics are called to participate in society and to promote just laws and policies, the NMCCB's lobbying efforts are appropriate and necessary, and exemplify how relevant the

Church is in discussion of the issues of the day.

The over arching theme of the bishops' legislative agenda this year is as follows: life, being the greatest gift from God, is top priority, as is concern for the poor. Not surprisingly, two bills expected to be considered in the state legislature this year and supported by the NMCCB relate to abortion. The first bill would require "parental consent" for a minor to have an abortion, and the second bill proposes a ban on abortions after 22 weeks. The NMCCB's support of these priorities is consistent with the first tenet of Catholic social teaching entitled Life and Dignity of the Human Person, which declares that "human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society," and further states that, "this belief is the foundation of all the principles of our social teaching."

[continued page 4]

Rights and Responsibilities: **A Catholic View**

Rene Ronquillo

In 1945, Rev. Martin Niemoller, German pastor and theologian wrote this poem as a reflection on the injustices committed against Jews during Hitler's reign:

"First they came for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Communist.
Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up, because I wasn't a Jew.
Then they came for the Catho-

lics,
and I didn't speak up, because I was a Protestant.
Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me."

Today, in Albuquerque 2011, this poem might be updated to read like this:

"First they came for the homeless,
And I didn't speak up because I wasn't homeless.

Then they came for the immigrants,
And I didn't speak up because I wasn't an immigrant.
Then they came for the unborn,
And I didn't speak up because they weren't my children.
And then they came for me, and by that time
There was no one left to speak up for me."

[continued page 4]

Governor Martinez Agenda: A Catholic View

Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J.

Note: This letter was printed in the January 5, 2011 Albuquerque Journal

Dear Editor,

The Jan. 1st front page presents Governor Susana Martinez, who is identified as a Catholic, and her husband, outside of the Cathedral on a very cold New Year's eve: knocking at the door which then opened, being told "welcome" by the Archbishop who then blessed them. This event is symbolic of what Christianity is about.

I hope that this ritual reminds Gov. Martinez of the Christian-biblical teaching of welcoming the immigrant who is in desperate need. The governor has the correct stance on "welcoming" the unborn child, who legally and unjustly is not considered a person and can be aborted up to the 9th month of pregnancy.

Immigrants should not be criminalized, harshly treated nor should families trying to survive be hastily deported. This is not only Catholic teaching; it is basic human love and respect. "Securing" the border is not the only task or responsibility for our leaders. I hope that the governor will do what she can to prevent immediate family separation due to deportations.

The Christmas story in Matthew's Gospel of Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus fleeing to Egypt on short notice, based on an inspiration from God, to protect the child's life, is gravely relevant today. How do we know that an honest family is not being inspired by God to leave for a land of abundance and opportunities to "save" their children's lives? As a nation based on Judeo-Christian values, we should do better than "pagan" Egypt did during Jesus' time.

The U.S. has unjust laws regarding the legal status of both the innocent unborn child and the non-criminal immigrant.

Fr. Rafael Garcia, S.J.

Easter Bags for Those Who Are Homeless

This Easter, Sunday, April 24, a group of us will share in the joy of Christ's resurrection by distributing Easter bags full of hygiene and other useful items to the nearly 200 people who are homeless that come to our church for the Bread & Blessings hot meal every Sunday.

We are collecting the following items for this special project:

- Socks
- Men's and Women's Underwear
- T-Shirts (Preferably X-Large or Large)
- Baseball Caps
- Travel Size Shampoo and Conditioner
- Toothbrushes and Toothpaste (No Mouthwash)
- Soap and Lotion
- Men's and Women's Deodorant
- Hand Sanitizer, Sunscreen
- Lip Balm
- Sunglasses
- Combs
- Feminine Products
- Toilet Paper
- Tissues
- Rosaries
- Pocket Bibles
- Easter Candy

Please drop these items off at Immaculate Conception Church (7th & Copper) by Wednesday, April 20. Monetary donations will also be gratefully accepted.

How you can volunteer:

We will need volunteers to sort the donations. If you would like to help assemble the bags, we will do that on Saturday, April 23 at 10:30 am at the church parish hall. If you and your family would like to volunteer at our Bread & Blessings meal on Easter Sunday or any other Sunday, you are always welcome from 12 to 2 pm.

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Shawver at 247-4271 or ImmConYASJ@gmail.com

Mike Shawver





Operation Rice Bowl: A Lenten Journey with Catholic Relief Services

Mike Shawver

Operation Rice Bowl Prayer

We lift our prayers to you, God of Love, on behalf of our brothers and sisters in need. As we learn about their struggles, our almsgiving comes to their aid; our fasting unites us in their hunger. You call us to be disciples for all nations. Bless us this Lenten season. Amen.

Ash Wednesday is March 9, 2011, and the start of our Lenten journey towards Easter. This year will be the third year that our parish community has participated in Operation Rice Bowl, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services, the international humanitarian outreach of the Catholic Church.

All parishioners are encouraged to take the rice bowl and accompanying calendar to their homes and place it on the dinner table or another place that can easily be accessed by the entire family. The calendar is an excellent resource for daily prayers, education about global poverty, fasting suggestions, recipes from other countries, and personal stories of our brothers and sisters all over the world and how CRS is helping them.

The Rice Bowl is symbolically shaped like a bowl of rice because that is what many individuals eat for an entire day. Last year we collected \$2,113 in our rice bowls. This offering was sent to Catholic Relief Services to help them in their work to provide clean water, food, education, medical care, and non-violence training to our brothers and sisters who are suffering all over the world.

Thank you for your generosity to pray, fast, learn, and give again this year!! For more information, please visit Operation Rice Bowl at the web site listed below.

<http://orb.crs.org>

Catholic Charities Lenten Reflection Calendar

Rosie C. Shawver

During the season of Lent we are called to prepare ourselves for the feast of Easter. You can do so by accessing Catholic Charities Lenten Reflection Calendar on the web at the site listed below. This calendar leads you through the Lenten 2011 season in prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and learning. Its focus is meeting Christ in those that Catholic Charities serves in the state of New Mexico. The calendar will be accessible on the Catholic Charities web site by the end of February, 2011.

www.ccasnm.org

A Prayer For Wisdom in Voting

Jesus, we thank you that the "politics" of your kingdom starts with "the least of these."

Help us to examine every moral, social, and political issue based on how it affects the poor.

The reign of God is one of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Inspire us to be witnesses to and workers for peace with justice and mercy.

The righteous ones know and protect the rights of those in need.

Give us the courage to speak out for justice in our communities.

God, you created all human beings in your image.

Guide us to make choices that honor human dignity in this country and everywhere.

Holy Spirit, you give us the grace and understanding for every good work.

Amen



Legislative Agenda (continued)

The NMCCB's second initiative focuses on the education of our children. The NMCCB supports placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot that would afford voters the opportunity to decide whether the interest earned on New Mexico's Permanent Fund should be tapped to pay for educating children of preschool age. This critical period in a child's development has been largely neglected even though studies show that 90 percent of a child's brain development happens between birth and age five. Children are among the most vulnerable among us and Catholic social teaching directs us to put their needs first -- "our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first."

The bishops are also concerned about those who are poor, the marginalized

and those among us without a voice. Consequently, they will be closely monitoring legislation that affects funding for social programs for the poor as well as opportunities for immigrants to go to school and become productive members of our society. The bishops' stance on immigration is intimately tied to several tenets of Catholic social teaching. Church teaching calls attention to the need for solidarity with people of all races and nationalities stating, "we are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world." Support for the NMCCB's stance on immigration issues also springs from the Church's position on protecting the dignity of the human person, the call to

family and community and the fifth tenet of social teaching: the dignity of work and the rights of workers. This mandate provides that, "the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation."

The NMCCB's legislative agenda has the support of all three bishops and is the product of their mutual prayer and discernment. As Catholics it is our duty to follow their example and, consistent with the doctrines of Catholic social teaching, engage in government and society. To learn more about the NMCCB's activities or to find out how to participate in the legislative process, visit the Conference web site at <http://www.archdiocesasantafe.org/ABSHeehan/Bishops/AboutConf.html>.

Rights & Responsibilities (continued)

As Catholic Christians, we have a responsibility to "speak up" for the voiceless and to take action when we are aware of injustice around us.

Regarding "Rights and Responsibilities," one of the seven themes of Catholic social teaching, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops states: "The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities--to one another, to our families, and to the larger society."

Additionally, regarding "Participation," another theme of Catholic social teaching, the bishops state: "We be-

lieve people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable."

We belong to one another -- we are called to be ONE. I can't think of a better Bible story that confirms this tradition than the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)

Now you might be asking yourself, "What can I do?" "How can I be a voice for my brothers and sisters?" Here is list of some practical things we can do to fulfill our Christian responsibility of participating in the creation of a more just society:

- Read Patrick Trujillo's article in this newsletter on important issues under consideration in the current legislative session.

- Read the JustNews newsletter every quarter -- I'm a little biased on this :)
- Take time to educate yourself and to understand the root causes of some of these issues. There are a lot of issues out there, so choose those that you stir passion for you. A great place to start is www.usscb.org where you can search the latest news, social justice and life issues.
- Learn who your congressman and senators are by going online to www.nmlegis.gov.
- Write letters, emails or place phone calls to the appropriate elected officials when issues are up for votes by them.
- Write letters to the editor of various print publications such as the Albuquerque Journal, the Alibi or El Seminario.
- And of course, vote!

Social Justice Ministry:

Fr. Rafael Garcia, SJ (Pastor)
Mike Shawver (Director)
Joseph Sandoval (Designer)
Dianne Dragoo (Editor)

Steve Budenski
Frank Fingado
Ida Fingado
Barbara Monjaras

Ed Monjaras
Rene Ronquillo
Pilar Sanchez
Rita Sanchez

Rosie C. Shawver
Patrick Trujillo

Contact Mike Shawver at
247-4271 or immconyjasj@gmail.com
with any feedback or questions about
this newsletter