
MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE MESSENGER

The bishops of Missouri, speaking together on matters of public policy, form the Missouri Catholic Conference.



July 2009

Annual Assembly

September 26, 2009

State Capitol, Jefferson City, Mo.

All Catholics throughout the state are invited to attend the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) Annual Assembly to be held on September 26, 2009 at the State Capitol in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Join Catholics from all over Missouri to discuss current issues including: the economy, immigration, school choice, social networking, poverty, abortion and much more.

Hosted by the Missouri bishops, the Annual Assembly gives Catholics an opportunity to learn about public policy issues facing citizens and take what they learn back to their home parishes.

For more information on workshop presenters and events join our Facebook group, Missouri Catholic Conference or go online to www.mocatholic.org. **Admission is free and lunch will be provided.**

To register, send in your registration form, go online to www.mocatholic.org or call 1-800-456-1679.



More inside

No Easy Fix for Hard Times

By Mike Hoey, Assistant Director Missouri Catholic Conference

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of calling for social justice in the marketplace, and the U.S. Catholic bishops have not remained silent as the nation plunges into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. When panic struck Wall Street last year, Bishop William F. Murphy of Rockville Centre, speaking on behalf of all the U.S. bishops, decried the speculative mania and the search for “excessive economic rewards” and admonished financial institutions to better monitor their activities. The bishop suggested that more stringent government regulation of financial markets might be necessary. On June 29, Pope Benedict XVI, in a new encyclical discussing authentic human development (*Caritas in Veritate*), reiterated the bishops’ concern, noting that the regulation of financial sectors may be necessary to “discourage scandalous speculation.”

The bishops and Pope Benedict XVI join a long line of critics calling for reform of how banks and other financial institutions invest money and extend credit. In June President Obama responded by proposing sweeping new regulations to increase the power of the Federal Reserve to oversee the financial system. The proposal also calls for consumer protections on credit cards, annuities, and other financial investments. But it takes more than lenders to create a housing bubble and a credit crisis. In recent decades many Americans have become increasingly comfortable doing what the federal government does so well – spending money they don’t really have. Home foreclosures remain high. RealtyTrac, an organization that tracks home foreclosures and other housing trends, projects at least 3.1 million household loans will be foreclosed on in 2009. In a typical year that figure would be around 550,000.

Missouri is faring better than many states, but plenty of homeowners are asking for help. Last year, the St. Louis Catholic Charities Housing Resource Center received 31,128 calls from people facing a housing crisis and the pace is similar in 2009 – about 2,500 calls a month. According to Karen Wallensak, executive director of the resource center, the nature of the housing crisis has shifted from defaults on sub-prime mortgages to families losing homes after losing their jobs. People are also giving up rental properties and moving into their parents’ basements or friends’ houses. Wallensak is worried about the toll the economic downturn is taking on families and children. “I have been extremely concerned about the despondency we see among our clients. Threats of suicide are commonplace; we have had several outbursts of rage here in our lobby that have required intervention,” she said.

Retrenchment is the new byword. Families are trying to pay down their credit cards, avoid unnecessary purchases, and save money. Saving rates by households is at its highest level in 15 years. The repeated admonitions of recent popes to adopt a less materialistic lifestyle is now not a lifestyle choice but a necessity for economic survival.

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Themes from *Caritas In Veritate*

(On integral human development in charity and truth)
Pope Benedict XVI, June 29, 2009

The Economy – A human activity

The economic sphere is neither ethically neutral, nor inherently inhuman and opposed to society. It is part and parcel of human activity and precisely because it is human, it must be structured and governed in an ethical manner (Par 36).”

Markets must be moral.

“Profit is useful if it serves as a means towards an end that provides a sense both of how to produce it and how to make good use of it. Once profit becomes the exclusive goal, if it is produced by improper means and without the common good as its ultimate end, it risk destroying wealth and creating poverty (Par 21).”



The economy is for the person, not the person for the economy.

“I would like to remind everyone, especially governments engaged in boosting the world’s economic and social assets, that the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: “Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life” (Par 25).”

Dangerous speculations should be discouraged.

Both the regulation of the financial sector, so as to safeguard weaker parties and discourage scandalous speculation, and experimentation with new forms of finance, designed to support development projects, are positive experiences that should be further explored and encouraged, highlighting the responsibility of the investor. (Par 65).

Globalization is what we make of it.

Despite some of its structural elements, which should neither be denied nor exaggerated, “globalization, *a priori*, is neither good nor bad. It will be what people make of it.” We should not be its victims, but rather its protagonists, acting in the light of reason, guided by charity and truth. (Par 42).

Many families are simply innocent victims of the nation’s boom and bust way of doing business. Security derivatives and toxic assets are as foreign to them as the Chinese lenders that hold much of the nation’s debt. Unfortunately, that doesn’t make families immune from the hard economic times.

Good-paying jobs are being eliminated. In June, for example, GM shuttered one of its two production shifts in Wentzville. These closings affect dealerships, auto part suppliers and many other businesses. June’s unemployment rate of 9.5 percent was the highest in 26 years and marked the 18th straight month of job losses, making the current recession the longest since the Great Depression. The hard times are not just affecting blue-collar workers. College graduates can’t find work. Older workers, having seen their retirement savings vanish into thin air, are putting off retirement. Between September 30, 2007 and March 6, 2009, Americans lost \$3.4 trillion in retirement savings, according to the Urban Institute.

Catholic agencies across the nation and in Missouri are responding as best they can to the economic downturn with housing counseling, utility assistance, food, clothing, shelter, legal services, and medical care. But as wages and retirement savings fall off, charitable giving falls off too, making many agencies more reliant on government grants and contracts to provide help to the needy.

The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) has scrambled to protect public funding for Catholic Charities in both St. Louis and Kansas City-St. Joseph as well as other faith-based organizations. Even the Alternatives to Abortion program, which offers emergency housing and counseling as well as pre-natal care and adoption services for women in crisis pregnancies, was slated for funding cuts by the Missouri House of Representatives this past session until the Missouri Catholic Conference intervened. When the legislature debated how to allocate the federal stimulus funds, the MCC and Campaign Life Missouri added an amendment to expand funding for maternity homes and pregnancy resource centers.

The MCC also sought to protect funding for in-home care services for the elderly and disabled, arguing the program saved the state money by allowing people to avoid expensive institutional care and stay in their homes. Funding was maintained for a family preservation program that provides counseling so that children can continue to live at home rather than being placed in the state’s foster care system.

But if Missouri had not received a massive infusion of emergency federal aid to stabilize its state budget all of these programs would have been on the chopping block for funding cuts. According to Governor Nixon’s budget chief, Linda Luebbering, without federal stabilization funds Governor Nixon would have been forced to cut \$800 million from the core of the fiscal year 2010 state budget, which began June 30 of this year. Even with the federal help, Governor Nixon is still considering cuts to the budget proposed by the Missouri General Assembly. Funding cuts are still possible for numerous programs including Alternatives to Abortion.

The federal stabilization funds are intended to tide states over until the economy improves. The help runs out in two years, however, unless Congress enacts a new emergency measure. But what happens if things don’t get better and the federal government doesn’t rescue states a second time? This is the question that haunts state budget planners. In total, over the next two years, Missouri will receive \$2 billion in federal help for their state budget. But in 2012 the state could reach a cliff, where the pull-out of federal help necessitates massive budget cuts. Missouri, unlike the federal government, cannot deficit spend but must balance its budget each year.

Governor Nixon is trying to avoid this “cliff” effect by banking some of the federal stabilization funds for use in fiscal year 2012. In May the General Assembly appropriated \$1.4 billion of the federal budget stabilization funds for use in fiscal year 2010. But Governor Nixon in June vetoed or suspended \$430 million of this sum. The Nixon strategy is to make some budget cuts now and probably in fiscal year 2011, in order to avoid catastrophic budget cuts in 2012. The Nixon administration is also considering calling the General Assembly into special session to approve a bond issue that will allow the state to go ahead with certain projects like the renovation of the Ellis Fischel Cancer Center in Columbia.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration is betting that massive public spending will re-boot the economy, which, if successful, will spare states like Missouri from making painful funding cuts when the federal spigot is turned off. President Obama’s plan offers a mix of tax cuts and public investments in roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

MCC Annual Assembly

September 26, 2009

State Capitol Jefferson City, Mo.

Faith & Issues on Tap

Join us after the closing Mass at a local establishment for small group discussions and networking on how our Catholic faith intersects with issues in today's society. Interested adults please check "Faith & Issues on Tap" on the registration form below.

Youth Schedule (6th grade and up)

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Crossroads: A Walk for Life

All across America young people are taking steps to save lives. The Crossroads pilgrimage is a unique opportunity for young people to witness for life and to take an active role in the pro-life movement. Come learn about this project and how you can be a part of this exciting adventure.

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Legislative Scavenger Hunt

The State Capitol contains a wealth of history about Missouri and the legislative process. What a perfect place for a scavenger hunt! Don't miss this opportunity to have fun while learning about our state government. Prizes to be awarded.

12:15 p.m. Lunch (free)

1:15 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Mock Legislature

Childrens Care/Activities (ages 5 - 12)

Child care along with children activities will be available during the Annual Assembly. Please indicate that you are interested in child care/activities on your registration form.

Please fill out both sides, cut along dotted line and mail in:

Annual Assembly Registration Form

Missouri Catholic Conference, P.O. Box 1022 600 Clark Avenue , Jefferson City, MO 65102

Telephone: 1-800-456-1679 Fax: (573) 635-7431

Title: (Circle One) Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms./Fr./Deacon/Bro./Sr./Dr./Other

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____ Work: _____

Parish & City: _____

E-mail: _____

I am an individual with a disability and will need assistance.

I would prefer a vegetarian meal for lunch.

I am interested in child care/activities (ages 5-12). Names and ages:

My child is interested in youth activities. Names and ages:

Total # in family attending: _____

Annual Assembly Schedule

9:30 a.m.
Registration

10:00 a.m.
Opening General Session
Keynote address

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Morning Workshop

12:15 p.m.
Lunch (free)

1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Afternoon Workshop

2:30 p.m.
Closing General Session

3:15 p.m.
Closing Mass,
Concelebrated by Missouri
bishops, St. Peter Church

5:00 p.m.
Faith & Issues on Tap

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Reasons You'll Want to Attend the Annual Assembly

1. It's free!
2. Experience the beautiful State Capitol.
3. Enjoy a day with family.
4. Learn about public policy issues.
5. Network with fellow Catholics.
6. Meet the MCC Staff.
7. Share in an inspiring Mass.
8. Hear dynamic speakers.
9. Mingle with Missouri bishops.
10. It's free!

Annual Assembly Workshops

Pro-Life Legislator: What does that Mean?

Samuel Lee, Pro-life Lobbyist and Director,
Campaign Life Missouri

Blueprint to End Poverty:

Moving Forward in a Coordinated Effort

Brian Colby, Director of Communications and
Outreach for the Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance

Disaster Preparedness: A Parish Response

Dante Gliniecki, Statewide Volunteer Coordinator,
State Emergency Management Agency

Economic Class: Making Ends Meet in Missouri

Jim Wirth, Ph.D., Human Development
Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

Is the Sacrament of the Eucharist More Than a Visit with Jesus?

Jim Kemna, Director, Religious Education for the
Diocese of Jefferson City

Healthy Food, Local Food---

Networking a Sustainable Future

John Ikerd, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Agricultural
Economics, University of Missouri

Immigration Law in a Time of Political and Economic Upheaval

Tim Wichmer, Immigration Attorney,
Bernhardt & Wichmer, P.C

Newcomers in Missouri:

Latino Immigrants in Their Own Voices

Domingo Martinez, Director, Cambio Center,
University of Missouri

Missouri's New Organ Donation Law: Ethical Issues

Rev. Edward Richard, Professor of Moral
Theology, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

Re-integrating Offenders Into Society

George Lombardi, Director,
Missouri Department of Corrections

St. Lawrence: A Model of Social Justice

Deacon John Weaver, Sacred Heart Church

Saving Catholic Schools

John T. James, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Educational
Leadership and Higher Education, St. Louis University

School Choice Around the Country

John T. James, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Educational
Leadership and Higher Education, St. Louis University

Stewards of Creation:

A Catholic Approach to Climate Change

Dan Misleh, Executive Director,
Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?

Jim Wirth, Ph.D., Human Development
Specialist, University of Missouri Extension

A Spirituality of Fruitfulness:

Strengthening Marriage and Family

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Bishop, Dio-
cese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

Hard Times, Tough Decisions: How Missouri State Government is Responding to the Economic Downturn

Linda Luebbering, Director,
Missouri Office of Budget and Planning

How Catholics Can Leverage Social Networking

Elizabeth Westhoff, Assistant Communications
Director, Archdiocese of St. Louis

Hard Times *continued*

Unlike the budget stabilization funds, the federal stimulus monies cannot be banked by states but must be spent now and over the next two years in an effort to stimulate economic activity. Missouri will receive \$2 billion of these funds. If the stimulus funds have their desired effect of creating jobs and boosting tax revenues, it could improve the revenue picture for state governments and reduce the level of budget cutting required in future fiscal years.

All of this sounds wonderful but it's being paid for with deficit spending. Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke has warned Congress that failure to control the nearly two trillion dollar federal deficit may lead to higher interest rates that discourage spending and investing, which would set back economic recovery. Yet many economists believe some government spending is necessary to ward off a depression. How much to spend and what to spend it on is hotly debated. Economists react to the Obama's plan a bit like Goldilocks sampling the three bears' porridge: too hot (too much spending leading to inflation), too cold (not enough spending to restart the economy), or just right. New York University economist Nouriel Roubini, the man credited by many with predicting the end of the housing bubble, thinks the spending plan proposed by the Obama administration is about right but cautions that there must be an "exit strategy" where public spending is scaled back so stock values and housing prices do not skyrocket.

The Catholic Church teaches that government exists for the purpose of maintaining the common good, which includes ensuring that people have access to the basic goods of life, such as food, clothing, health care and education. But how government ensures the welfare of its people - direct intervention in economic emergencies or more indirect market incentives - is open for debate. Tipping the balance too far either way - toward public or market solutions - can set back economic recovery and cause great harm, especially to the poorest and most vulnerable members of society.

Fine-tuning the economy is not the job of Catholic bishops or theologians, but in his *Caritas In Veritate* Pope Benedict insists that economic development is not just a technical matter but requires "a transcendent vision of the person," a recognition of "the divine image in the other." It is in this light that the pope admonishes all involved in development efforts "that the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: 'Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life.'" In an earlier encyclical, *Spe Salvi* (2007), the pope observed that no human system is perfect. Each generation, he said, must search for a way to justly order human affairs but realize that the search is never complete. Free market zealots and socialist planners may think they have the economic miracle in their back pocket, but most people know the answers are not that simple.

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<p>Transportation:</p> <p>I am driving:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am willing to drive others from my area</p> <p>Faith & Issues on Tap:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am interested in attending Faith & Issues on Tap</p> <p>I need a ride:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bus from Kansas City or St. Louis (fee may apply)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Add my name to a carpool list & call me if a carpool is available in my area</p>	<p>Workshop Topics:</p> <p>I am interested in attending the following workshops. Please rank your top four choices.</p> <p>_____ Pro-Life Legislator: What does that Mean?</p> <p>_____ Blueprint to End Poverty: Moving Forward in a Coordinated Effort</p> <p>_____ Disaster Preparedness: A Parish Response</p> <p>_____ Economic Class: Making Ends Meet in Missouri</p> <p>_____ Is the Sacrament of the Eucharist More than a Visit with Jesus?</p> <p>_____ Healthy Food, Local Food: Networking a Sustainable Future</p> <p>_____ Immigration Law in a Time of Political and Economic Upheaval</p> <p>_____ Newcomers in Missouri: Latino Immigrants in Their Own Voices</p> <p>_____ Missouri's New Organ Donation Law: Ethical Issues</p> <p>_____ Re-integrating Offenders Into Society</p> <p>_____ St. Lawrence: A Model of Social Justice</p> <p>_____ Saving Catholic Schools</p> <p>_____ School Choice Around the Country</p> <p>_____ Stewards of Creation: A Catholic Approach to Climate Change</p> <p>_____ Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?</p> <p>_____ A Spirituality of Fruitfulness: Strengthening Marriage and Family</p> <p>_____ Hard Times, Tough Decisions: Missouri Government's Response to the Economic Downturn</p> <p>_____ How Catholics Can Leverage Social Networking</p>
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