



Good News

November/December 2016

Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri

MERRY CHRISTMAS

from the Missouri Catholic Conference

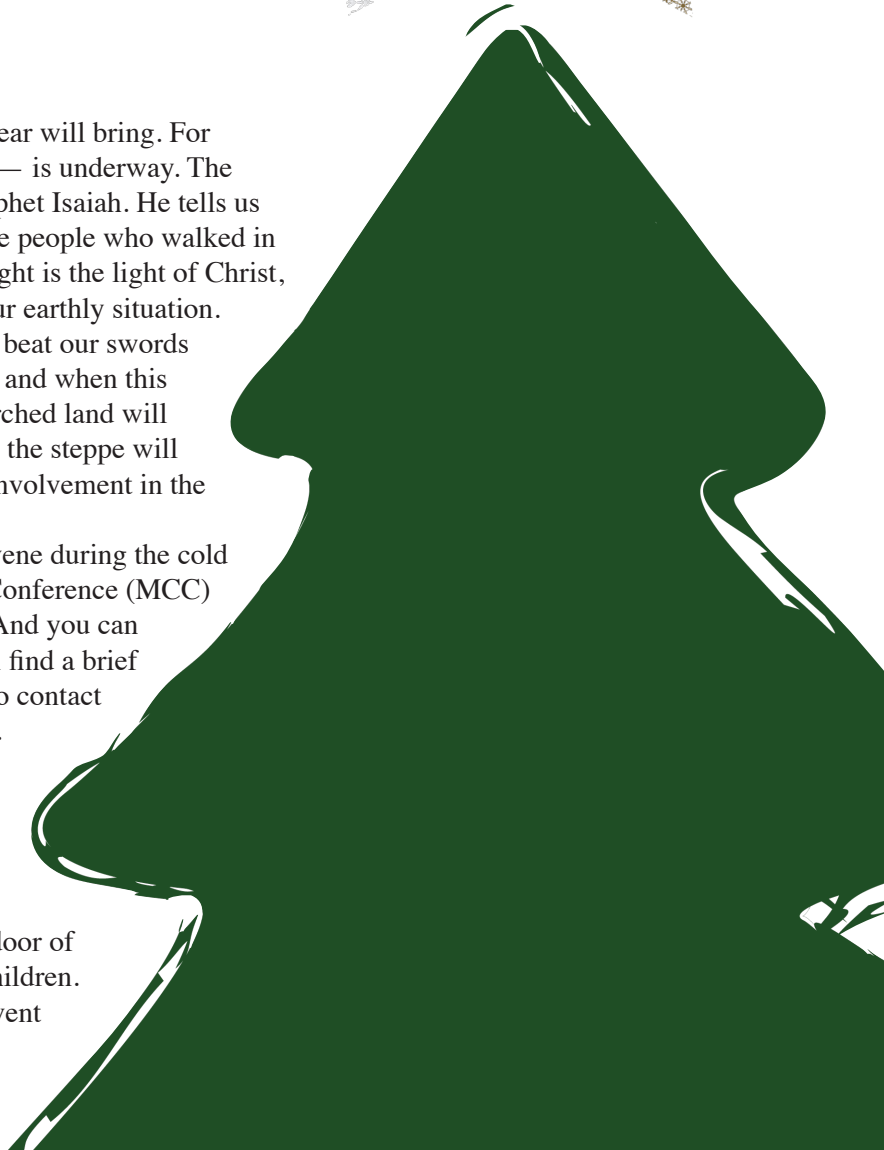
Let the Light of Christ Shine in the Darkness

The election is over and many wonder what the new year will bring. For Catholics, however, the new year — the liturgical year — is underway. The Advent season regularly features readings from the prophet Isaiah. He tells us to hope in God, not earthly powers, and proclaims: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” For Christians, that light is the light of Christ, a light that can never be extinguished no matter what our earthly situation.

Isaiah proclaims a way of peace and justice. We are to beat our swords into plowshares, the wolf is to be the guest of the lamb, and when this great work of mercy is completed the desert and the parched land will exult, the steppe will bloom with abundant flowers. But the steppe will not bloom without our courageous witness, our active involvement in the issues now facing our state and nation.

As Congress and the Missouri General Assembly convene during the cold and often dark days of January, the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) will seek to offer the light and warmth of Christ to all. And you can help in this great endeavor. In this *Good News*, you will find a brief summary of MCC practical tips and tools you can use to contact legislators and better understand the legislative process.

May the light of Christ shine in our hearts and in the hearts of our elected officials so that our state and nation will act with compassion toward the unborn, the poor, the sick, the dying, and the immigrants and refugees who have fled violence to find safety in America. The Year of Mercy is now over, but may the door of mercy in our hearts remain wide open to all of God’s children. God Bless each of you and may you have a blessed Advent and Christmas season.





The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) seeks to inform, educate, and mobilize citizens on the major issues confronting our state and nation. You can learn about the MCC's legislative priorities at www.mocatholic.org and also access the legislative toolbox, a set of guides and graphics that can help you understand how the legislature functions and how you can get involved. You can take a look inside the toolbox here.

MOCAN

By becoming a member of the MCC's Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN), you'll receive updates on MCC progress and involvement with legislation, and you'll also be able to get involved yourself. If you receive our MCC Weekly Update by email then you are a member of MOCAN. If you do not receive our emails, but would like to become a part of MOCAN, contact the MCC at (573) 635-7239 or mocatholic@mocatholic.org. Non-Catholics are also welcome to join.



MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Stay up to date on important legislative dates with this helpful calendar.



STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE LINKS

Find your state and federal legislators by using these directories, and also learn more about the legislative processes in Missouri and the federal government.



LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

Don't worry, you're not the only one who gets lost in legislative jargon. This glossary will help you learn legislative terms.



HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

It's probably been a few years since you've seen Schoolhouse Rock, so we've provided a graphic that explains the path a bill must take to become a law in Missouri.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Want to send a letter, make a phone call or meet in person with your legislature? Find out how in this guide.

Get ready for the 2017 legislative session by visiting the Missouri Catholic Conference website at mocatholic.org! Email us with questions at mocatholic@mocatholic.org.



2017 Legislative Calendar Dates to Know

JANUARY

3

Congress
opens

JANUARY

4

MO General
Assembly
opens

JANUARY

9

Governor's
inauguration

JANUARY

20

Presidential
inauguration

MAY

12

MO General
Assembly
closes

Abbreviated Legislative Glossary (Find the full glossary at mocatholic.org)

Bill: Proposed legislation that will be debated and voted upon by the Missouri General Assembly. If a bill is approved by both the House and the Senate and signed by the Governor, it becomes state law.

Calendar: A list of bills pending on the floor of a legislative chamber for debate and vote. Each chamber maintains several calendars, for example, there is a calendar for perfection (when a bill can be amended) and a calendar for third reading (when a bill is considered for final approval by a chamber).

Conference Committee: If both chambers pass the same bill but in different forms, then the bill may be referred to a conference committee to work out the differences. Conference committees are composed of five senators and five representatives. Any bill approved by a Conference Committee must be sent back to both chambers for final approval.

Constitutional Majority: The majority of all elected members of each chamber required for final passage of a bill. In the House 82 votes are required; while in the Senate 18 votes are required.

District: The geographical area – based on approximately equal population – that a state representative or state senator serves. A state representative represents on average 34,300 constituents while a state senator represents about 164,500 constituents. There are 163 House districts and 34 Senate districts.

Fiscal Note: Each bill must have a fiscal note detailing what its fiscal impact will be on the state of Missouri and on local governments. Bills with fiscal notes projecting large losses of funds to the state or local governments undergo additional scrutiny by the Budget Committee in the Missouri House and the Fiscal Oversight Committee in the Senate.

Joint Resolution: Legislation that proposes a change to the Missouri Constitution. Any joint resolution approved by the Missouri General Assembly must be submitted to the voters of Missouri for final approval. A simple majority vote of Missouri voters is required for approval of a constitutional amendment.

Journal: The daily minutes of the proceedings of each chamber. The journals do not include remarks and debate by members but they do include all motions and votes on bills and amendments.

Perfection: The stage at which a bill is debated and amended (“perfected”). The vote may be an unrecorded voice vote.

Point of Order: Any member may raise a point of order when he/she believes the rules of the chamber are not being followed. For example, a member may raise a point of order that an amendment to a bill is not germane to the general subject matter of the legislation. In the Missouri House points of order are ruled on by a parliamentary committee while in the Missouri Senate the President Pro Tem rules on points of order.

President Pro Tem: A member selected by the Missouri Senate to lead the Senate. The majority party normally ensures the President Pro Tem is one of its members. The President Pro Tem assigns bills to committees and rules on parliamentary points of order.

Speaker: The member of the Missouri House of Representatives chosen to be Speaker of the House. He/she is usually a member of the majority party. The speaker refers bills to committee, often presides at the dais and participates with a parliamentary committee in deciding points of order.

Third Reading: After a bill is perfected it must be third read before it can be sent to the opposite chamber. To third read a bill requires approval by a constitutional majority – 82 in the Missouri House, 18 in the Missouri Senate. These are recorded votes kept in the legislative journals.

Veto: The governor may veto a bill. If a bill is vetoed, the governor must send a veto message to the general assembly explaining the reasons for the veto. The general assembly automatically reconvenes on the first Wednesday after the second Monday in September to consider the governor’s vetoes. A veto session may last up to 10 days. If the governor neither signs nor vetoes a bill it becomes law as if it was signed by the governor.

Voice Vote: Many legislative decisions – a vote on an amendment or on whether to perfect a bill – frequently involve only a voice vote. The presiding officer at the dais calls the vote. Voice votes allow for a more efficient legislative process; however, they also allow members to avoid being recorded for controversial votes. Votes giving final approval to bills, however, always require a recorded vote, which can be found in the legislative journal for that day’s action.

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MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



Pope Francis Closes the Year of Mercy

Pope Francis ended the Year of Mercy on the Feast of Christ the King by closing the Holy Door at St. Peter's basilica in Rome. Thus ends the Pope's Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, a year of mercy called for by the pope because, "this is the time for mercy. It is the favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation." The proclamation of a Jubilee year has roots in the Old Testament. In ancient times, a year of Jubilee was called every fifty years as a reminder of God's providence and mercy. This past year's extraordinary Jubilee began on December 8, 2015, the fiftieth anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council. On the day of the door's closing, Pope Francis signed an apostolic letter imploring all Christians of good will to continue to be merciful. "Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the Church; it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are

made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father." Pope Francis also called for a culture of mercy "based upon the rediscovery of encounter with others, a culture in which no one looks at another with indifference or turns away from the suffering of our brothers and sisters." "The Jubilee now ends and the Holy Door is closed," Pope Francis extolled. "[b]ut the door of mercy of our hearts continues to remain wide open."

