

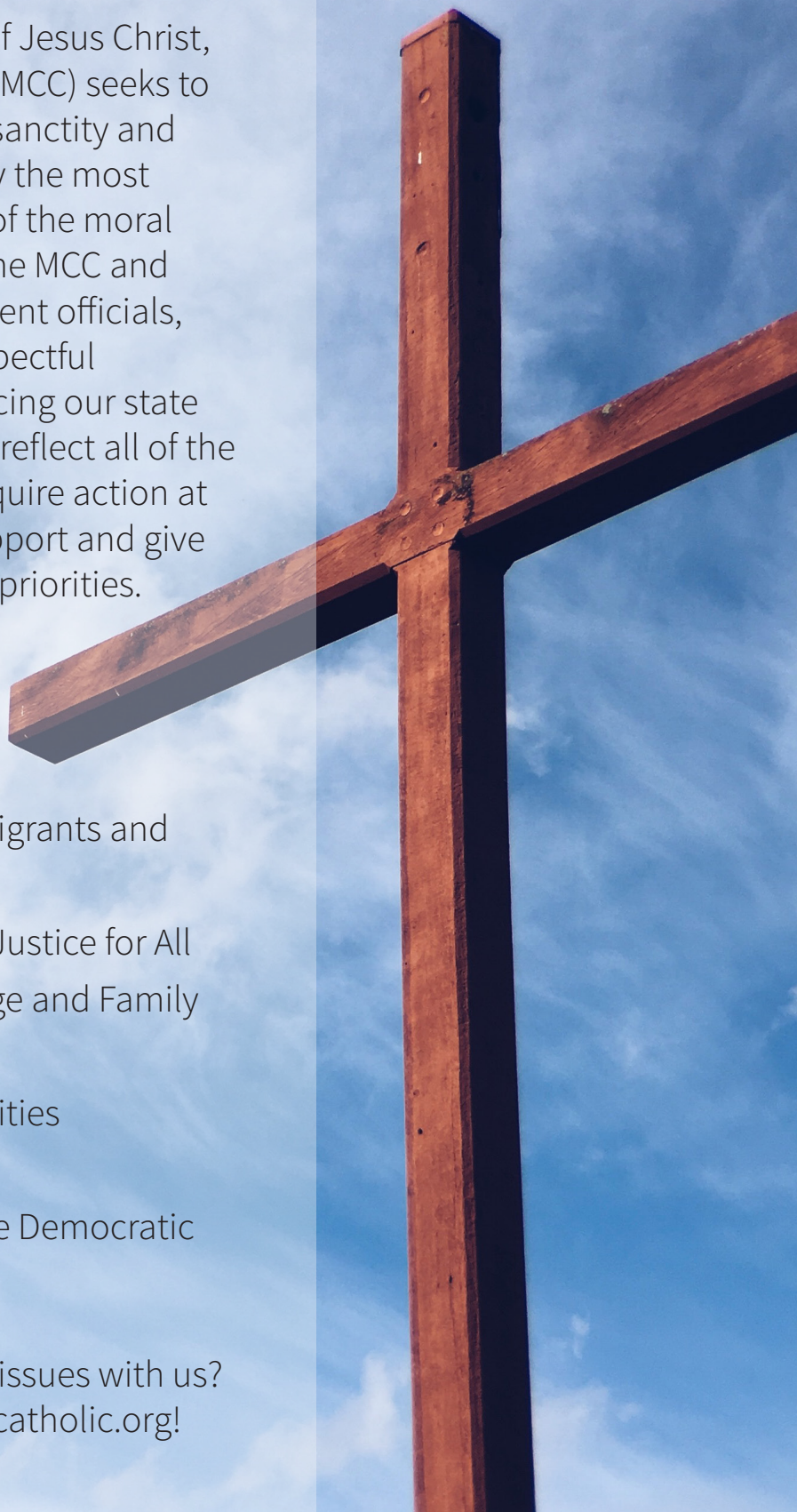


In faithfulness to the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) seeks to create a culture that respects the sanctity and dignity of all human life, especially the most vulnerable among us. In the light of the moral teaching of the Catholic Church, the MCC and the Missouri bishops call government officials, legislators and all citizens to a respectful discourse about the challenges facing our state and nation. This agenda does not reflect all of the MCC's concerns, but those that require action at this time. In 2020, the MCC will support and give special emphasis to the following priorities.

2020 Public Policy Priorities

- Protect Human Life
- Welcome and Accompany Immigrants and Refugees
- Advance Social and Economic Justice for All
- Uphold and Strengthen Marriage and Family
- Defend Religious Liberty
- Support Educational Opportunities
- Reform Criminal Justice
- Promote Civility and Faith in the Democratic Process

Want to advocate for any of these issues with us?
Become a MOCAN member at mocatholic.org!



2020 Public Policy Priorities

Protect Human Life

Recognizing the right to life is the foundation for all other human rights, the MCC will defend against violent attacks on human life, such as genocide, abortion, euthanasia, experiments involving the destruction of human embryos or the use of aborted fetal remains, and the death penalty. The MCC will support a culture of life that provides alternatives to abortion for mothers who choose life for their children, and alternatives to the death penalty, such as incarceration that protects the public. “It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop.” (Saint John Paul II, Gospel of Life, par. 101)

Welcome and Accompany Immigrants and Refugees

The MCC will bear witness to the God-given human dignity of all immigrants and refugees, including the undocumented and those displaced by war and persecution, reminding lawmakers of the right of people to migrate to other countries. The MCC will urge Congress to enact the DREAM Act, immigration reform, and provision and funding for refugee resettlement. “Every stranger who knocks at our door is an opportunity for an encounter with Jesus Christ, who identifies with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age.” (Pope Francis, 2017 Message for World Day of Migrants and Refugees)

Advance Social and Economic Justice for All

Pope Francis calls for all people to hear the cry of the poor and to reform “unjust social structures” that deny basic necessities and opportunities for social and economic advancement. The MCC will support expansion of and adequate funding for and access to Medicaid and mental health services, protection of social programs that benefit the poor, and stronger consumer protections, including payday lending reform. The MCC will also support healing of racial and cultural divisions while working to build vibrant communities that serve the common good. “Certainly, it is the proper function of authority to arbitrate, in the name of the common good, between various particular interests; but it should make accessible to each what is needed to lead a truly human life: food, clothing, health, work, education and culture, suitable information, the right to establish a family, and so on.” (Catechism, par. 1908)

Uphold and Strengthen Marriage and Family

Family is the basic cell of human society and the foundation of civilized life. Presently, the institutions of marriage and family are threatened by a culture that no longer values authentic marriage and stable families. The MCC will support legislation and funding for programs that encourage two-parent families and provide assistance to single parents and their children; promote responsible parenthood; assist victims of domestic violence; and, help families who are poor or have children with health problems or disabilities. “The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family.” (Catechism, par. 2210)

Defend Religious Liberty

The Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the freedom to exercise one’s religious faith without threat of coercion is grounded in the dignity of the human person and that no person should be forced to act in a manner “contrary to his conscience,” (Dignitas Humanae, par. 3). The MCC will oppose unjust discrimination against people of faith, including the targeting or registering of any particular faith, and will support religious liberty protections in all human rights laws. “[T]he right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.” (Declaration on Religious Freedom, par. 2)

Support Educational Opportunities

All parents have the right, and should have opportunities to receive assistance when necessary, to choose the schooling most beneficial for their children and which stands in accord with their moral and religious convictions. The MCC will support educational opportunities for all children in all school settings, be they public, private, or religious. The MCC will support financial assistance so families can meet their children's educational needs, and repeal of Constitutional provisions, such as Missouri's Blaine Amendments, that discriminate against children who attend private and religious schools. "As those first responsible for the education of their children, parents have the right to choose a school for them which corresponds to their own convictions." (Catechism, par. 2229)

Reform Criminal Justice

The Catholic Church supports a criminal justice system in which the offender is held accountable, the victim receives support, and the community assists the offender in successfully re-entering society. The MCC will support meaningful reforms, such as allowing greater judicial discretion in criminal sentencing, along with reasonable possibilities for parole, and ensuring offenders have realistic opportunities for employment upon their release. "We believe that both victims and offender[s] are children of God. Despite their very different claims on society, their lives and dignity should be protected and respected. We seek justice, not vengeance." (U.S. Bishops, A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice)

Promote Civility and Faith in the Democratic Process

Saint John Paul II said that Democracy needs wisdom and virtue if it is to flourish. Pope Francis told Congress that the chief aim of politics is the common good. The MCC will encourage civility and bipartisan cooperation among elected officials, strong ethical standards for those in public office, respect for the rule of law, and measures that allow citizens to more fully participate in their government. "[R]esponsible authority also means authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to put power into practice as service (patience, modesty, moderation, charity, efforts to share), an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work." (Compendium, par. 410)

inside the latest

Messenger



A quarterly publication by the Missouri Catholic Conference

A look into the immigration process in the United States: this Messenger shines light on a complicated process that can take years to complete.

In this edition of *Messenger*, we offer this primer on U.S. immigration law to help shed some light on a complicated process that takes years to navigate for those seeking to make the U.S. their home. We hope this will take away some of the mystery of the U.S. immigration process for those unfamiliar with how the system works.

The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which governs current U.S. immigration law, was passed by Congress in 1965. It sets a limit of 675,000 permanent immigrant visas (often referred to as "green cards" because of their distinctive color) that may be granted on an annual basis. To ensure the diversity of the immigrant population, no more than seven percent of the total number of green cards awarded can go to immigrants from any one foreign nation.

Foreign nationals seeking to immigrate to the U.S. can legally apply for a "green card" if they fall into one of the following categories. Once granted a "green card", they obtain lawful permanent resident status, but not citizenship. **Read more at mocatholic.org or in your diocesan newspaper.**

"The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin." –Catechism of the Catholic Church No. 2241



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Mid-January, Governor Mike Parson delivered the annual gubernatorial address to Missouri legislators outlining his priorities for the next fiscal year. He emphasized economic development successes over the last year, including plans by Bunge North America to move its headquarters from New York to St. Louis, and indicating he will continue to focus on workforce development and improving Missouri's aging infrastructure.

The same week, the governor also released his proposed budget for FY 2021. The proposal presumes that the general assembly will pass legislation that would require internet vendors to collect sales tax on sales of products purchased online in Missouri. The governor proposes using the additional funds from the internet sales tax to set up a rainy-day fund for emergencies and to use towards paying off outstanding public debts. The governor's budget

proposal will be debated in the House Budget committee and the Senate Appropriations committee over the next few months before the end of session.

He also raised concerns about a ballot initiative to expand Medicaid that is currently underway, stating that expanding the program will require funds be taken from other government programs, or result in a tax increase. The Missouri bishops have come out in support of the Medicaid expansion initiative, because of the significant number of Missouri citizens who cannot afford health insurance and because of the importance of the program to the healthcare delivery system. The expansion would likely result in as many as 250,000 additional citizens obtaining health care coverage who currently do not have it. **More information about the benefits and costs of expanding Medicaid are available on the MCC website at mocatholic.org.**



Dear *Good News* reader,

I hope you are enjoying the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) bi-monthly newsletter, *Good News*, and the other communications we issue, such as the *MCC Messenger*, which appears in the diocesan papers on a quarterly basis. We try our best to keep you informed about developing issues that pose great moral questions for our state and nation and alert you when action is needed.

With your help over the last several years, we have passed historic pro-life laws and made sure Catholic high school students can receive A+ scholarships. In 2020, the MCC will continue its work on a number of important public policy issues, including providing women with Alternatives to Abortion, repealing the death penalty, ensuring adequate social services and healthcare for the poor, and promoting educational opportunities for all school children, including those attending Catholic schools.

The MCC will not succeed in any of these efforts without the involvement of committed Catholics like you. Without your help, the needs of the most vulnerable among us are likely to be forgotten in the halls of Congress and in our State Capitol. That is why the MCC wants to stay in contact with you, so you know what is going on and can respond by contacting your elected officials when critical legislation is pending.

You currently receive MCC communications for free. At this time I am asking you to consider a donation to help the MCC. If you can afford to give \$20, \$30, \$40, \$50 or more, your donation will help us to continue providing you with our MCC publications. To make a donation, please use the envelope provided, or visit our website (www.mocatholic.org) to donate by credit or debit card. If you cannot give a donation at this time, you will still continue to receive *Good News* at no charge. If you would prefer to receive our information electronically, please contact us with your email address.

Thank you and God bless!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler McClay". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping loops and a prominent crossbar.

Tyler McClay
Executive Director and General Counsel