



2019 Annual Assembly: A day of fellowship, education, & prayer.

On Saturday, October 5th, the Missouri Catholic Conference held its 2019 Annual Assembly at the Missouri State Capitol building in Jefferson City, drawing Catholics from around the state to a day of fellowship, education and prayer. The theme for the day was “Raising the Next Generation of Catholic Advocates,” issuing a call to young advocates to rise up and carry the mantle for those who have gone before.

The day began with an inspiring keynote address by David Bereit, Founder of 40 Days for Life and current Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS)

partner. Bereit outlined the four common traits of societies in decline - decrease in religious belief, increase in immorality, breakdown of the family, and devaluation of human life. He then offered examples of young Catholics advocates who have been inspired to start ministries around the country; ministries that are helping reverse troubling trends in American culture. One of those ministries is The Culture Project, which seeks to help young people cope with the emptiness of modern life by teaching virtue. He also mentioned FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) the organization for which

Bereit currently works that sends young missionary disciples to proclaim the Gospel on over 1,000 College campuses throughout the country. Bereit's address ended with a quote from Mother Theresa, who once told an admirer to "find your Calcutta" when asked how he could emulate her life. David encouraged everyone in attendance to find their own Calcutta. A video of David's keynote presentation can be found at mocatholic.org.

Attendees next heard from four seasoned advocates who shared their experience advocating on education, social justice, criminal justice, and pro-life. Sister Cecelia Ann Rezac started things off by sharing about her work as a middle school teacher and Catholic school administrator in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau. Sister Rezac described how she found the most important advocacy tool in dealing with her students was to show them love. Mike Haltermann, former CEO of Catholic Charities of Kansas City-St. Joseph, then described his experience working to secure funding for affordable housing for military veterans. His work culminated in the development of St. Michael's veteran center, a complex providing homeless vets a place to live and find community. Lois Thomas of the Diocese of Jefferson City described

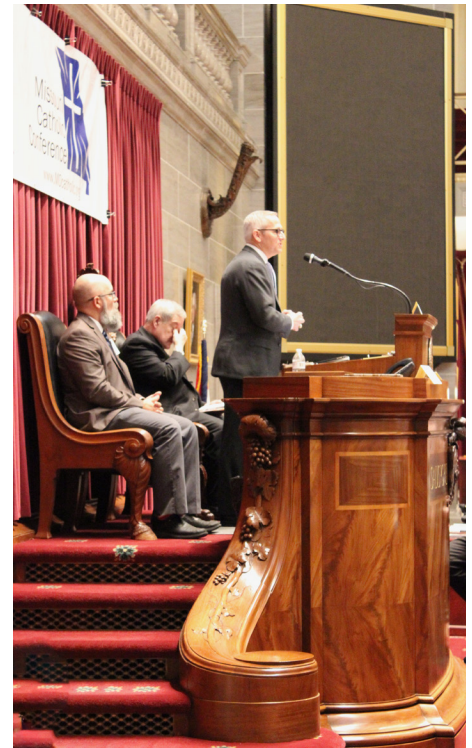
her work as an advocate for prison inmates who she visits on a regular basis at several corrections facilities in mid-Missouri. She described the sheer joy of seeing men transformed through her ministry of reconciliation, in one instance two rival gang members hugging after a retreat she offered. Finally, attendees heard from Sam Lee, a long-time advocate on pro-life issues in Missouri who has been involved in helping pass some of the most pro-life legislation in the country. Lee explained that he doesn't always know which legislation he passes will have the greatest impact on saving unborn lives — sometimes the best results come from laws that don't grab headlines.

After lunch, the conference continued with six seminars on various topics, including advocacy 101, pro-life apologetics, gender ideology, immigration, racism, and the Pope's recent encyclical on youth. The Annual Assembly concluded with Mass at St. Peter's Catholic Church across from the Capitol during which Bishop Rice offered a wonderful homily bringing a close to an informative day. If you missed this year's Assembly, mark your calendar for Saturday, October 3rd, when the Missouri Catholic Conference will host its 25th Annual Assembly at the Missouri State Capitol.



Attendees who rode the bus from Springfield posed for a photo in the Senate Chamber with Bishop Rice. The MCC thanks this group and others who came from around the state for traveling to be with us on the day of the Annual Assembly!

David Bereit's keynote address captured the attention of all generations of Catholics in attendance. The MCC is immensely thankful to Mr. Bereit for sharing this encouraging message at this year's Annual Assembly.



The MCC recognized four seasoned Catholic advocates who have used their gifts in different ways throughout their careers. The four bishops presented Lifetime Advocate Awards to the recipient from their diocese.



Archbishop Carlson and Bishop Rivituso of the Archdiocese of St. Louis and Deacon Sam Lee, Campaign Life Missouri, pro-life lobbyist, Archdiocese of St. Louis



Bishop Johnston of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph and Mike Halterman, Former CEO, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph



Bishop McKnight of the Diocese of Jefferson City and Lois Thomas, Prison ministry, liaison Algoa Correctional Center, Diocese of Jefferson City



Bishop Rice of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau and Sister Cecilia Ann Rezac, M.S., Director of Schools, Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau



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MCC recognizes service of Bill McAnany, WWII veteran and Pearl Harbor survivor



Just before lunch, attendees were treated to a video presentation about the experience of a local Catholic WWII veteran, Bill McAnany, who witnessed first-hand the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 as a 20-year-old navy radiology technician. Bill and his wife Linda received a warm welcome and a token of appreciation from Bishop McKnight. The video is available to view at mocatholic.org and on YouTube.