

Good News

Bringing the light of Christ to Missouri.



October 2012
Vol. 31 No. 7

In This Issue:

MCC Annual Assembly
Draws 600 Catholics to
Capitol

Address on Religious
Liberty: Excerpts from
Baltimore Archbishop
Lori's Address to MCC's
Annual Assembly



"Religious liberty is a gift we must never take for granted and must remain vigilant in safeguarding. We know this from our country's own history and from the history of other nations that this most precious of freedoms can erode or even be lost."

Address on
Religious Liberty,
Archbishop William Lori,
MCC Annual Assembly,
Oct. 6, 2012

MCC Annual Assembly Draws 600 Catholics to Capitol

There were fire trucks, volleyball players and a wedding party all scurrying about the Capitol grounds and the St. Peter parish complex Saturday morning October 6, as the Missouri Catholic Conference convened for its 2012 Annual Assembly. The Jefferson City Fire Department celebrated its 100th anniversary with a parade that featured old time fire trucks from all over the state, St. Peter's Elementary School held a volleyball tournament, and there was a morning wedding at St. Peter Church.

The competing activities made for some logistical challenges but none of it deterred some 600 Catholics from making their way into the Capitol building to hear Baltimore Archbishop William Lori address how citizens could respond to the growing threats to religious liberty now emerging in the United States.

Archbishop Lori delivered his keynote address from the dais of the Missouri House chamber, lightheartedly remarking, "What a bully pulpit." He told the assembly that "Religious liberty is a gift we must never take for granted," and went on to review some of the early history of the "American experiment in which the God-given gift of religious liberty is recognized and protected in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights."

The archbishop discussed a growing pattern of religious discrimination emerging, including the recently issued mandate from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that requires nearly all employers to cover abortion drugs and contraceptives in their health plans even if this violates their moral and religious beliefs.

He commended the Missouri legislature, the Missouri bishops, the Missouri Catholic Conference and the many parishioners whose "work and witness led to the override of Governor's Nixon's veto of SB 749, the religious liberty bill."

The keynote address was followed by workshops on a variety of issues, from end of life concerns and immigration to school choice and health care. Many crowded into a presentation on the new federal health care law – the Affordable Care Act (ACA), offered by Brian Colby, the policy director of the Missouri Health Advocacy Alliance.

Colby discussed how ACA establishes health insurance exchanges where people can receive tax credits to purchase health plans from private insurance companies.

The ACA also expands Medicaid, the joint federal-state program that provides health

Continued on page 4.

Address on Religious Liberty

Excerpts from Baltimore Archbishop William Lori's Address to the 2012 Annual Assembly of the Missouri Catholic Conference

Religious liberty is a gift we must never take for granted and must remain vigilant in safeguarding. We know this from our country's own history and from the history of other nations that this most precious of our freedoms can erode or even be lost. Time and again our Holy Father has spoken out courageously on behalf of victims of religious persecution, especially those in the Middle East and Africa. When a group of U.S. Bishops met with the Holy Father earlier this year, the Pope delivered an important talk on religious liberty, in which he said this: "It is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres... Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion," the Pope said.

To tell the truth, however, many people of good will, including many fellow Catholics, do not think that religious freedom is threatened in the United States. After all, our churches are open, our institutions continue to function, and on the surface it doesn't seem as though much has changed. But we are here to look beneath the surface, to see clearly the threats, to analyze them, and then to resolve to address them as individuals and as a community of faith. ...

The nation's first bishop, John Carroll, hailed from a distinguished Maryland family. His cousin, Charles Carroll,

was the only Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence. Although the Carroll's were a well-to-do and distinguished family, they were not exempt from the unjust legal restrictions which Maryland colonial law imposed on its Catholic citizens in the 18th century. Among them was a



Photo by Jay Nies, Catholic Missourian
Archbishop William Lori

prohibition against Catholics holding public office. Nonetheless active in colonial politics, Charles Carroll recognized early on that only independence from the British crown would bring about authentic religious and civic freedom in America. He risked his life, family, and property in supporting the revolutionary cause, but he did so, and I quote: "To obtain religious as well as civil liberty" – and he added – "God grant this religious liberty may be preserved in these states to the end of time." ...

One of the ways that secularists seek to marginalize faith is by embedding in law a definition of what religion is and what it is meant to do. It is an extremely narrow definition found

in the HHS mandate (more on that later) but also in various state laws. It is a definition that reduces freedom of religion to freedom of worship and seeks to confine the Church's activities to the four walls of the parish church. A church activity is deemed 'religious' only if the church in question hires mainly its own, serves mainly its own, and exists almost exclusively to inculcate its own doctrine. But the moment a church seeks to serve the common good or influence public opinion then such a church and its activities are deemed 'secular' and we are told that we must play by the rules – and the rules often mean violating our own teaching, not in preaching, but in practice. ...

In August 2011, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services published its Preventive Services Rule and asked for comment. This rule was part of implementing the Affordable Care Act. It required virtually all employers to provide through their employee benefits plans abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception. Religious employers could be exempt from doing so if they conformed to a very narrow definition, which I mentioned already, namely, the religious employer could qualify for an exemption so long as it hires members of that religion and serves its own members and existed almost solely to promote religious doctrine. Anything else was deemed by the government as a 'secular' enterprise. If a religious organization hires people of other faiths, if it seeks to serve people of all faiths and no faith at all, and if it engages in education, social services, and charity – then, according to the HHS rule, it

is not ‘religious enough’ to be exempt from having to provide surgical procedures & pharmaceuticals judged to be immoral. And this came after the Hosanna-Tabor case in which the U.S. Department of Justice tried to argue that a church had no more rights in hiring its ministers than a labor union or a social club have in hiring their employees –a view that the Supreme Court unanimously rejected.”

The point is that the Administration is drawing lines where we, the sponsors of religious works don’t draw lines ourselves. The government’s attempt to tell the church which of our institutions seem religious to the state is profoundly offensive and entangles the government in the internal life of religious institutions. Unless we stop it now, this attempt to narrow the role of religion in our culture will spread like a virus through our nation’s laws and policies. If this attempt by the government goes unchecked, the future will look like this: either we stay in the pews or else violate our consciences... not a good menu from which to choose. ...

What is true in the State of Maryland is true here in Missouri— that the Catholic Church is the largest provider of social and charitable services to the poorest of the poor. We are the largest private educator and we struggle largely at our own expense to educate some of the most disadvantaged children ... often lifting them up out of poverty and transforming their lives. We want to continue doing this but in fidelity to the faith that inspired us to undertake these services in the first place. *This is the kind of country the United States was meant to be. ...*

We also believe that private employers who want to follow their consciences should be allowed to do so– and until

now they were – This includes an air conditioning company in Colorado run by a Catholic family that recently won injunctive relief from a Federal judge from having to conform to the HHS mandate. It includes organizations that are not Church owned but serve the Church’s mission, such as Our Sunday Visitor and the Knights of Columbus. Churches are responsible employers; so are conscientious employers such as those I’ve mentioned. They provide good jobs and good benefits – they are not part of the problem but rather they are part of the solution! No one is forced to work for an institution based on Christian principles and besides all this, the government has exempted many groups from pro-



viding these services by ‘grandfathering them’ – but it has not yet budged with regard to the objections of the Catholic Church, other churches, and private employers with conscientious objections to the HHS rule. ...

The Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and enacted in 1786, proclaims it tyrannical for the government to force an individual to contribute money “to the propagation of opinions in which he disbelieves” – but that is the net effect of the HHS mandate on private employers, on church-related employers, and on churches themselves. It is up to us to make sure that such tyranny does not become the law of the land. Sadly,

this was not the posture of a federal court judge who recently dismissed the lawsuit filed by Mr. Frank O’Brien, owner of a small mining company in St. Louis. Mr. O’Brien sued over the HHS mandate, which took effect this summer and which forced him to violate his religious beliefs by providing health insurance coverage of abortion drugs, sterilizations and contraception. Shockingly, the judge determined Mr. O’Brien would not be violating his religious convictions by providing the coverage. The judge in the case referred to the subsidy of abortion drugs and contraceptives by a religiously conscientious employer as a ‘slight burden on religious exercise’ yet condemned the plaintiff’s reliance on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, saying the 1993 statute “is not a means to force one’s religious practices upon others.” ...

Our responsibilities call us to rally for religious freedom in the context of national common good and as a beacon of hope for people suffering religious persecution in various parts of the world. We are called to engage our fellow citizens and government leaders robustly but do so in civility, respect and love. ...



For a video of Archbishop Lori’s address, visit www.MOCatholic.org.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Jefferson City, MO
Permit #42

Missouri Catholic
Conference
PO BOX 1022
Jefferson City, MO
65102-1022

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

Phone: (573) 635-7239
Fax: (573) 635-7431



Missouri Catholic
Conference



MoCatholic

Online at
MOCatholic.org

Board of Directors

Most Rev. Robert J. Carlson
General Chairman
Archbishop of St. Louis

Most Rev. John R. Gaydos
Executive Chairman
Bishop of Jefferson City

Most Rev. Robert Finn
Vice Chairman
Bishop of
Kansas City/St. Joseph

Most Rev. James Johnston
Bishop of
Springfield/Cape Girardeau

Most Rev. Edward Rice
Auxiliary Bishop
Archdiocese of St. Louis

MCC Annual

Assembly Draws 600 Catholics

Continued from page 1.

coverage for the poor, but Colby explained that expanding Medicaid would be optional for each state. Whether Missouri opts into the expansion remains to be seen.

For young people sixth grade and up, the Assembly offered a separate youth track, including a mock legislative proceeding held in the chamber of the

Missouri Senate. During the session, the teens debated prayer in schools and the right to conceal and carry weapons. The day ended with a Mass concelebrated by the Missouri bishops. The Gospel choir from St. Therese Little Flower Parish in Kansas City provided the music.

The MCC thanks all of those who came to Jefferson City to celebrate faith and freedom at the 2012

Assembly. If you missed this year's event, plan on coming next year. The 2013 Assembly will be held on Saturday, September 28. Mark your calendars now!



Nearly 70 youth took part in the Mock Legislature.