

Good News

Bringing the light of Christ to Missouri.



November 2011
Vol. 30 No. 7

In This Issue:

Take Back the Family

**California Bypasses
Parents in New HPV
Vaccine Law**

**Catholic Teaching on
Family**

**Family Rights, Duties at
Heart of School Choice
Debate**

**Who Really Benefits
From California's HPV
Law**



**"As the family goes, so
goes the nation, and so
goes the whole world in
which we live."**

**Pope John Paul II,
London Observer,
Dec. 7, 1986**

Take Back the Family

Not so very long ago Catholic homes were adorned with pictures of the Holy Family and families prayed the rosary nearly every day. Non-Catholics took note of how Catholics honored Mary, the mother of God. Faith and family were intertwined.

Today a Catholic home might look just like any other home. There might be a crucifix on a wall but the television, home computer and cell phones are ceded much more attention. No wonder Catholic parents have a difficult time imparting their faith and values to their children.

Families face a culture that too often glamorizes evil and a media that markets sex and violence. In this brave new world, the individual comes first. Self-gratification is more important than personal commitment. As a consequence, marriages now begin and end in just a few years or less.

It is bad enough that the culture is so often hostile to family life; now government has joined in tearing down the family. Recently, California passed

a law that allows a child as young as 12 to obtain the HPV vaccine without parental permission.

It is time to take back the family. Ironically, this will require families to resist the temptation of withdrawing into their own private world. Ultimately, strong families will only flourish in a culture that supports them. So



taking back the family—making it strong again—means parents must be involved in their neighborhoods and communities and even be active as citizens.

The Missouri Catholic Conference is especially concerned with legislation and public policies that affect the family. The new California law is not the law in Missouri, but vigilance is necessary. This is one West Coast trend Missouri should not emulate.

California Bypasses Parents in New HPV Vaccine Law

California recently enacted a law that allows parents to be bypassed when decisions are made about whether to inject their child with Gardasil, a vaccine that protects against the human papillomavirus that causes cervical cancer. HPV causes changes in the cervix that can lead to cervical cancer later in life. Children can be given Gardasil without parental permission as early as age 12.

According to the law's supporters, bypassing parents is a necessary public health measure that must take precedence over any old-fashioned notion of parental authority. Certainly, protecting people from cervical cancer is a laudable public health objective, but this does not justify the use of any means to get there.

In an emergency, a doctor will treat a child without the parents' permission, but no emergency presents itself in this situation. The doctor has plenty of time to consult with the parents, and the parents, after hearing all of the information, can make the decision as to whether their child should be given the HPV vaccine. This is

also a good time for the parents and the child to discuss sexuality in its fullest sense, including how it is a gift from God designed for expression within a marriage be-

tween a man and a woman.

There are situations where a child could be in danger of being exposed to the HPV through no fault of their own, such as when a child is a victim of incest. California lawmakers could have waived parental permission in these situations, but they did not. Instead, the state passed a law in which the parents' permission can be waived in all cases. Why?

Because, according to some public health advocates, teens are going to engage in sexual activity regardless of their parents' objections, so protection is needed from HPV. This argument is based on the premise that most parents will not discuss sexual matters with their children and therefore someone else should make the decision about the HPV vaccine. Who is this someone else?

"... the law gives license to those medical practitioners who do not value family consultation, a hallmark of good family medical practice."

Is it the child? The idea that a child of 12 can give informed consent in these situations is ridiculous. So, who is really making the decision? The decision has been turned over to a doctor or perhaps to a nurse at a health clinic who has decided not to consult with

the parents.

A responsible doctor or nurse will normally consult with the parents, except in cases of family incest

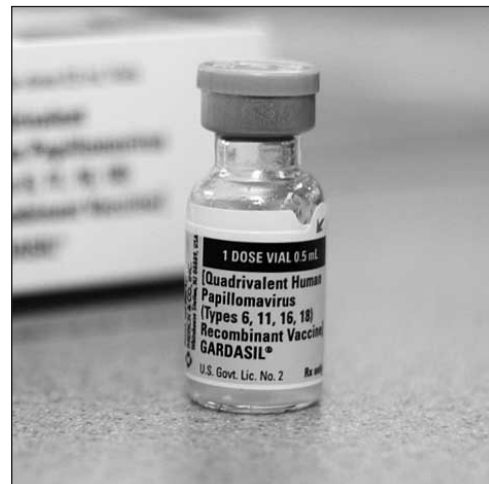


Photo courtesy of Jan Christian

where they have a duty to notify the state. But the California law is not addressed to them; instead, the law gives license to those medical practitioners who do not value family consultation, a hallmark of good family medical practice. In effect, the law endorses a lower standard of medical ethics.

The California law also serves to weaken the bonds of the family. Pre-teens are exposed to many influences outside the family but now the process is taken further: the child supposedly makes his or her own medical decisions. This naïve view of childhood rests on a delusion: that children can act like adults. In fact, children need parents who will love them and guide them to adulthood.

The family is the basic building block of society. It is the rock upon which the whole house of society is built. Our laws should support this foundation, not undermine it.

Catholic Teaching on Family

The Catechism of the Catholic Church strongly affirms the importance of the family as “the original cell of social life” (par. 2207) and offers other insights into the proper relationship between society and the family:

“The family must be helped and defended by appropriate social measures. Where families cannot fulfill their responsibilities, other social bodies have the duty of helping them and of supporting the institution of the family. Following the principle of subsidiarity, larger communities should take care not to usurp the family’s prerogatives or interfere in its life.” (par. 2209)

The Catechism sets out specific ways in which government must honor and assist the family by ensuring especially:

- “the freedom to establish a family, have children, and bring them up in keeping with the family’s own moral and religious convictions;
- the protection of the stability of the marriage bond and the institution of the family;
- the freedom to profess one’s faith, to hand it on, and raise one’s children in it, with the necessary means and institutions;

• the right to private property, to free enterprise, to obtain work and housing, and the right to emigrate;

• in keeping with the country’s institutions, the right to medical care, assistance for the aged, and family benefits;

• the protection of security and health, especially with respect to dangers like drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc;

• the freedom to form associations with other families and so to have representation before civil authority.” (par. 2211)

Family Rights, Duties at Heart of School Choice Debate

Many school choice proponents tout how it will inject competition into the educational marketplace forcing schools to get better or close down. It is an argument with some merit, but it is not the focus of Catholic teaching, which stresses the rights and duties of parents to educate their children in accord with their moral convictions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

“The role of parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate

their children are primordial and inalienable.” (par. 2221)

Education must begin in the home and K-12 schools are no substitute. And this education is about more than learning secular subjects. Parents have the responsibility to create “a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule. The home is well suited for education in the virtues.” (par. 2223)

Catholic schools offer a natural extension of this education in the virtues and parents have the right to choose these schools for their

child’s instruction. The Catechism states that: “Public authorities have the duty of guaranteeing this parental right and of ensuring the concrete conditions for its exercise.” (par. 2229)

Many parents, however, lack the financial ability to send their children to a school that corresponds to their own convictions. For this reason, the Missouri Catholic Conference supports legislation that would allow parents to claim a tax deduction or credit for their child’s K-12 expenses—be it for attendance at a public, private, parochial or home school. It is about family rights and duties.

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

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

Who Really Benefits from California's HPV Law

California's new HPV law will certainly benefit Merck, the maker of Gardasil, the HPV vaccine. California's Senate Appropriation's committee estimated the bill will cost federal taxpayers \$30 million to pay Merck for the medication. "Most of that money would be wasted," said Bill May, Chairman of Catholics for the Common Good in California. That's because three injections costing \$120

each are required over a six-month period. But a 2010 press release issued by the Centers for Disease Control reported that a survey of 20,000 teens aged 13 to 17 showed that only 27 percent of teens receiving the injections received the recommended three shots, putting into question the efficacy of the immunization for these teens.