



March 2012

Office for Social Concerns

Catholic Diocese of Columbus

Upcoming Events

Lent 2012 – Operation Rice Bowl

This year's theme for Catholic Relief Services' Operation Rice Bowl, "For I was hungry," reminds us that when we serve our brothers and sisters in need, we also serve Jesus. During Lent, we answer the call to serve the "least of our brothers and sisters through Catholic Relief Services' Operation Rice Bowl. Since 1975 Operation Rice Bowl has offered Catholics in the United States a way to connect with our brothers and sisters around the world. CRS invites Catholics to pray with their families and faith communities; fast in solidarity with those who hunger; learn about our global community and the challenges of poverty overseas; and give sacrificial contributions to those in need. Additional materials can be obtained through the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540. You may also visit the Operation Rice Bowl website at <http://orb.crs.org>. All are encouraged to participate in Operation Rice Bowl.

March is Developmental Disabilities Month

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) facilitates the implementation of the Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities by calling for inclusion of people with disabilities in the life of the church and the community. Many of NCPD's resources can be found online at www.ncpd.org. Copies of NCPD's "Opening Doors of Welcome and Justice to Parishioners with Disabilities: A Parish Resource Guide," can be obtained through the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540.

Care Enough to Act

Pray • Volunteer • Donate

Support our Catholic Charities

Today offers an opportunity to rediscover in a personal way the call to love of neighbor, especially those in need. In addition to the parish based efforts and organizations that serve the poor and vulnerable, we have several diocesan sponsored agencies and organizations that respond to need and act in our name. Our diocesan Catholic Charities include Catholic Social Services, J.O.I.N., St. Francis Center in McArthur, St. Stephen's Community House, St. Vincent Family Centers, and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Visit the website www.charities.colsdioc.org for more information.

April 6 – Good Friday – Walking Stations of the Cross

The many facets of faith and justice will be the focus of the annual Walking Stations of the Cross. The walk will begin with an opening prayer at St. Joseph Cathedral, 212 E. Broad Street, Columbus, at 8 a.m., Friday, April 6, 2012. Participants will stop at locations throughout downtown Columbus to recognize Jesus Christ's suffering and crucifixion as well as reflect on a current area of social concern. For more information, contact the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540 or the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry at (614) 241-2565.

April 27 – J.O.I.N. BiblioBenefit

J.O.I.N.'s annual BiblioBenefit is Friday, April 27, 2012, 7-10 p.m. at St. Andrew Church, Nugent Hall, 1899 McCoy Road, Columbus. The Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs' annual BiblioBenefit fundraising event helps support their mission to provide emergency aid to the poor with food, clothing, prescriptions, transportation, utilities, and referral information. Tickets are \$50. Reservations can be sent to J.O.I.N., c/o Alice Heller, 578 E. Main Street, Columbus, OH 43215. Questions can be directed to (614) 241-2530.

May 15 - Feast Day of St. Isidore the Farmer

May 15 is the feast day of St. Isidore the Farmer. This is a day to recognize the call to stand in solidarity with farm families, agricultural laborers, and migrant farmworkers. We all eat. We all benefit from the fruits of their labor. Please pray for our farming community. For more information on Catholic rural life activities and resources, visit the National Catholic Rural Life Conference's website at www.ncrlc.com or contact the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at (614) 241-2540.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month

The National Catholic Partnership on Disability's mental illness council produced the DVD/resource booklet *Welcomed and Valued: Supporting People with Mental Illness in Parish Life*. For more information, visit the NCPD website at www.ncpd.org or contact them at (202) 529-2933.

May 19 – Service Sunday – Catholic Social Services

Join Catholic Social Services to help older and disabled Franklin County residents in need of help with a small home repair, painting, yard work, or special project. Volunteer: May 19, 2012, starting at 9 a.m. Donate: Not time to volunteer? Help by providing a donation to assist CSS with purchasing supplies for the day of service. Identify a person in need. Do you know of an older adult (60+) or disabled individual who lives in Franklin County and needs help with a small home repair or special project? For more information about CSS Service Sunday, contact Stephanie Jursek at (614) 857-1216 or sjursek@colscss.org.

Resources

For additional resources visit www.socialconcerns.colstdioc.org.

A Good Friday Reflection to End the Use of the Death Penalty

The Catholic Mobilizing Network to End the Use of the Death Penalty's new brochure which includes Pope Benedict XVI's November 2011 statements on the death penalty. www.catholicmobilizing.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Good-Friday-brochure-outside-revised.-v3pdf.pdf

Faithful Citizenship

It appears the campaign season is gearing up which provides us an opportunity to reflect on the priority issues for our nation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reissued their statement *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, which provides Church teaching about political responsibility and the important issues of our day. To read the statement and supplementary materials, visit www.faithfulcitizenship.org.



Sacraments and Social Mission Series

Penance: Reconciled to Right Relationship, Called to Heal and Restore is the latest document of the USCCB's *Sacraments and Social Mission* series. In preparation for the sacrament of Penance, we examine our consciences to identify ways we are not in right relationship with God and others, as well as how we participate in structures of sin that degrade the lives and dignity of others. Penance allows us to receive God's gift of mercy and forgiveness and to become vehicles of Christ's love, making amends and restoring justice and the bonds that have been broken. Share this resource with catechists, religious educators, teachers, and all Catholics. The series can be found at www.usccb.org/about/justice-peace-and-human-development/resources-and-tools.cfm.

Action Alerts

For current legislative action alerts visit www.socialconcerns.colldioc.org.



U.S. Bishops Continue Vigorous Efforts Against HHS Violations of Religious Freedom

The Catholic bishops have long supported access to life-affirming healthcare for all, and the conscience rights of everyone involved in the complex process of providing that healthcare. That is why they have raised two serious objections to the "preventive services" rule issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for comment in August 2011.

On January 20, HHS reaffirmed a rule forcing virtually all private health care plans to cover sterilization, abortifacients, and contraception. These are listed among "preventive services for women" that all health plans will have to cover without co-pays or other cost-sharing -- regardless of whether the insurer, the employer or other plan sponsor, *or even the woman herself* objects to such coverage.

The exemption provided for "religious employers" was so narrow that it failed to cover the vast majority of faith-based organizations—including Catholic hospitals, universities, and charities—that help millions every year, because it excludes those who mainly serve people of another faith.

On February 10, the Administration made this rule final "without change"; delayed enforcement for a year against religious nonprofits that were still not exempted (our charities, hospitals, and colleges); and promised to develop more regulations to "accommodate" them by the end of that additional year. But that promised "accommodation" still forces them to pay for "services" that violate their religious convictions.

- The original rule that violated our religious liberty so severely has not been changed, but finalized.
- HHS has promised some kind of "accommodation," but only after the election.
- The promised "accommodation"—even at its best—would still force our institutions to violate their beliefs.
- There is no exemption for objecting insurers, secular employers, for-profit religious employers, or individuals.

On March 14, the bishops on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Administrative Committee released a new statement called "United for Religious Freedom." In the statement they thank "all who have stood firmly with us in our vigorous opposition to this unjust and illegal mandate", clarify what the mandate is and is not about, and call for a nationwide prayer campaign to restore conscience rights and religious freedom.

ACTION: Please contact your Congressional Representative and your Senators with the following message: "We urgently need legislation to correct the recent HHS mandate's threats to religious liberty and rights of conscience. Please support the Respect for Rights of Conscience Act."

New Religious Liberty/Conscience Protection Prayers are now available as well as the latest information and action alerts via the U.S. Bishops' website at www.usccb.org/conscience.

Urge President Obama to Change Outdated Nuclear Policy

Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The Obama administration is currently weighing cuts in U.S. nuclear forces. Within weeks, the President will be making important, once-in-a-decade decisions on the Presidential nuclear weapons policy "guidance." This guidance affects everything from war plans to the size, structure and cost of the nuclear arsenal. It will help determine whether we continue to live with the threat of nuclear annihilation or move closer to a world free of the danger of nuclear war. Sign this petition to press President Obama to make good on his commitment to "put an end to Cold War thinking" and pursue further, dramatic steps that would make us all safer from the threat of nuclear weapons. *Please join thousands of Americans by adding your name to the following petition to the President before March 31, 2012.* To sign the petition go to: www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/war-and-peace/nuclear-weapons/petition-to-change-nuclear-policy.cfm

Catholic Organizations Urge a Just Farm Bill that Protects Hungry, Poor and Vulnerable People

Source: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, Catholic Charities USA, and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference have written a letter asking Congress to support a Farm Bill that provides for poor and hungry people both at home and abroad, offers effective support for those who grow our food, ensures fairness to family farmers and ranchers, and promotes stewardship of the land. To ready the recent letter on the Farm Bill go to www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/agriculture/upload/Joint-Letter-to-Senate-on-Farm-Bill-2012-03-06.pdf.

Immigration

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urge Congress to block the extension of the E-Verify Program in the absence of comprehensive immigration reform. The conference also urges passage of the DREAM Act. For more information about these issues visit the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Justice for Immigrants Campaign at www.justiceforimmigrants.org.

Domestic and International Issues

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops urge action on a number of domestic and international issues which include conscience protection and religious freedom, domestic and international poverty assistance programs, and deficit reduction discussions. To view policy positions and action alerts, visit www.usccb.org/jphd.

Information and Response Network

If you would like to receive legislative action alerts and upcoming events from the diocesan Office for Social Concerns via email, subscribe to the Information and Response Network. Please send an email to socmailbox@colsdio.org. Don't forget to visit our website at www.socialconcerns.colsdio.org.

