Lent is easy; Advent is hard. Of course that is false, but the fact remains that many Catholics do not know what to do during the season leading up to Christmas. The difficulty of celebrating Advent comes from the perception that, unlike Lent, external signs and actions accompany it. Lent is “easy” in the sense that Catholics know what to do: receive ashes on the forehead, abstain from meat on Fridays, fast, give alms, pray and give up something as a penance.

But what must Catholics do in Advent? Besides an Advent wreath, what is appropriate to this time of year?

The Catechism gives a brief but impressive answer. “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (CCC 524).

In the four weeks of Advent, Catholics live in a quiet “expectancy,” and join their ancestors in faith in waiting for the one that God has promised since the beginning, the one to save mankind from sin and death. However, Catholics also long to welcome Christ at the end of time.

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So, how can Catholics prepare? Catholics of all ages can meditate on the ways in which God prepared the world and the people of Israel for the coming of his Son. Children can become involved in the stories of the biblical characters by making a Jesse tree. As they make ornaments representing the ancestors of Jesus, they can recall the promises God made to these faithful men and women.

Adults can reflect on the genealogies of Jesus in the Gospels, especially through lectio divina. For example, Pope Benedict XVI, in his book “Jesus Christ, by the American Bible Society and the Vatican Publishing House, was released last month. This and other relevant books are available in the archdiocesan library. In the Mass readings for the Sundays of Advent, Jesus and the prophets predict the ‘coming of the Son of Man.’ In Matthew, Jesus says “Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.” John the Baptist cries out, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.”

How does this translate to daily life? It is a warning to be vigilant in thought, word and deed. When struggling with sin, Catholics should ask the saints for help and go to confession. When receiving the Eucharist, they should prepare a place in their hearts for Christ. Every Christian should help the poor, feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the imprisoned so that when the Lord comes, he will welcome a “good and faithful servant.”

Families can read the Blessing of an Advent Wreath from “Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers,” and recite the “O Antiphons,” said during evening prayer in the seven days leading up to Christmas Eve. They are well known as the verses of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

Advent, though it too involves outward signs, suggests quiet watchfulness—a peaceful moment before the exuberant joy of Christmas.

What did Christ’s mother do during Advent? Mary probably sewed baby clothes, while Joseph lovingly fashioned a cradle. But when all the preparations had been made, Mary had time to wonder at the miracle of Christ’s coming, and silently reflect on the love and faithfulness of God.

Liturgy resources available at http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-resources/advent/. Brianna Osborne is a staff writer for the Sooner Catholic and the editor of the Sooner Catholic e-newsletter. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, visit www.flocknote.com/archokc.
Archbishop named CRS Chairman

Baltimore/Oklahoma City (Nov. 19, 2013) -- Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City has been appointed chairman of the Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors by Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Ky., president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Coakley, a CRS board member since 2012 and a member of the board’s Governance and Nominations Committee, succeeds Bishop Gerald F. Kicanas, of Tucson, Ariz., as CRS chairman.

“It is a privilege to be appointed Chairman of the Catholic Relief Services Board of Directors, and I thank Archbishop Kurtz for entrusting me with this responsibility,” Archbishop Coakley said. “I am also deeply grateful to Bishop Kicanas for his sterling example and dedication as the previous chairman. As a member of the CRS board, I have witnessed CRS at its core – deeply grateful to Bishop Kicanas for his sterling service, and to all of their employees, volunteers and partners who work to bring relief to those in need of assistance around the world.

“CRS has a long and distinguished history of responding to human suffering and needs around the world and we, as a board, are honored to be associated with this important work. We are committed to supporting the extraordinary work CRS is doing every day.

“CRS is one of the largest and most influential Catholic relief and development organizations in the world. As a leader of the Catholic Church, I know that CRS continues to carry out the mission of the Church, which is to bring about justice, mercy and love into the world. The Board is committed to continuing this important work and Look forward to working closely with President Richard Rohrman, the new CEO of CRS.

“Finally, as the United States conference president, I know that many of the issues of promoting and protecting human life and dignity are connected to the goal of CRS, to alleviate suffering around the world. CRS is committed to promoting these values. I am looking forward to working closely with the CRS leadership.”

“The position of the CRS chairman is one of the most influential positions in the Catholic Church in the United States,” said Archbishop Coakley. “I am honored to be chosen to fill this role and look forward to working with my fellow board members and our CEO, Richard Rohrman, to promote the excellent work that CRS does around the world.”

The following events are part of Catholic Relief Services’ 150th anniversary:

Nov. 24 – Blessing of “Hanging 4 Justice” Procession, 3 p.m., Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Nov. 27 – MASS, 11:30 a.m., Saint Francis De Sales Chapel, Catholic Pastoral Center
Dec. 4 – Mass and Blessing of new Basilica, 10:30 p.m., Good Shepherd, St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Parish, Sunnyvale
Dec. 3 – Saint Anne Retirement Center Board Meeting, 8 a.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
Dec. 3 – Department Heads Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
Dec. 3 – Mass, 11:30 a.m., Saint Francis De Sales Chapel, Catholic Pastoral Center
Dec. 3 – Finance Council Meeting, 9 a.m., Catholic Pastoral Center
Dec. 4 – Dec. 5 - Catholic Relief Services Board Meeting, Baltimore, Md.
Dec. 6 – Information, 11 a.m., Patrick Church, Anadarko (with Our Lady of the Rosary Church, Binger and Saint Richard Church, Casenard)
Finally becoming Catholic (even if you happen to be one) by Father Shane Thayer

The Year of Faith is coming to a close on Nov. 24 and so I figure this is a good time to do what everyone else does at the end of the year: review the goodness over the past year and look forward to the future. What is it that we're most interested in this upcoming year? What's the one thing we're hoping for? Do you have a dream? What have you been wanting? For sure, you have your answer to this question: “What one thing ties together the other graces? It is the sacrament of baptism.” It's the sacrament of baptism because it is the sacrament of initiation. Baptism is the gateway to the Christian life. It is the doorway to the church. It is the sacrament of the New Life. George Weigel's column is distributed by the Denver Post, a member of the Associated Press, a nonprofit news cooperative, and is distributed by Wide World of Photos.

Vocations fair to feature religious orders by Tina Korbe Dzurisin

Meet Our Seminarians

This is the 13th part in a 24-part series to introduce the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City to the people they will one day serve as priests.

Alexander Kesl

1. What is your home parish?

Saint Francis of Assisi

2. What seminary do you attend?

Conception Seminary College

3. If it’s God’s will, what will you be doing eventually?

I am unsure of what God will have in store for me. I am open to where He might lead me. I am working towards a bachelor’s degree in Christian Science, and I am prayerfully seeking God’s will for me.

4. How old were you when you first thought about the priesthood?

I was about 12 years of age. I first thought of the priesthood when I was around 12 years old as I was praying about my future life and what God might have in store for me.

5. What is the most important thing you have learned since beginning the Seminarian Program?

The most important thing I have learned since beginning the Seminarian Program is the importance of prayer. It is the most important thing I have learned while in seminary in the life of a priest. I may have prayers and aspirations, but these pale in comparison to what God has planned for me and each one of us.

6. Do you have a favorite scripture verse?

The verse that I have found most appealing is from the book of Romans 8:28, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

7. What in your life makes your heart leap with joy?

The thing that I find most joyful is the fact that I have chosen to pursue the vocation of the priesthood. I have chosen to follow the path God has set for me, and I am excited to see where this journey will take me.

8. Describe your relationship with Christ.

Our relationship with Christ is one that is deeply rooted in love and devotion. We feel a strong connection to Christ, and we strive to live our lives in accordance with His teachings. We believe that Christ is always with us, and we seek to share the love and grace that He offers to all.

9. What’s the one thing you’re looking forward to during the Year of Faith?

The one thing that I am looking forward to during the Year of Faith is the opportunity to deepen my relationship with Christ and to grow in my understanding of His love for us. I am excited to participate in the many events and activities that will help me to reflect on my faith and to live it more fully.

10. What is the one thing you will take away from the Year of Faith?

The one thing that I will take away from the Year of Faith is the knowledge that God is always with us, even in the most difficult times. I will remember that no matter what happens, God will be with me and guide me through it. I will also be reminded of the importance of prayer and the power of faith.

11. What would you like to do after you graduate from seminary?

After I graduate from seminary, I would like to pursue a career in religious education. I am passionate about sharing the love of Christ with others and helping them to grow in their faith. I believe that this is a calling that God has placed in my heart, and I am excited to see how I can make a difference in the lives of those around me.

12. What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

My greatest strength is my ability to listen and to be present with others. I am open to God’s will and willing to respond to it. My weaknesses include a tendency to be too focused on myself and to struggle with Trusting God's plan for my life. I am working on developing these strengths and overcoming these weaknesses as I grow in my faith.

13. How do you feel about the Year of Faith?

I feel very excited about the Year of Faith. I believe that the events and activities of this year will help me to grow in my understanding of my faith and to deepen my relationship with Christ. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in this important event.

14. What advice would you give to someone considering the seminary path?

I would advise anyone considering the seminary path to pray seriously about it and to be open to God’s will. I would also encourage them to seek out the guidance of a mentor or spiritual director who can help them to discern their call. I would urge them to trust in God's love and to be willing to follow where He leads them.
Local Catholic food producers practice care for creation by Anamaria Scopec and Lidia Biddick

Local Catholic food producers practice care for creation by Anamaria Scopec and Lidia Biddick

November brings vibrant leaves, litters of peppers on the lawn, cold gusts of wind that one day intended to remind us to give thanks for the bountiful harvest God has given us. Benedict XVI, on the Italian Thanksgiving in 2010, urged the faithful to "re-evaluate agriculture in a way that develops something sustainable." For World Food Day in 2012, he suggested that small farms and agricultural cooperatives in Latin America, Oklahoma Catholics are working to help small farmers.

Bolíva Waldrop, music director at Epiphany Parish in Oklahoma City, co-founded the Food Cooperative to help connect local producers with consumers. The Coop, celebrating its tenth anniversary this month, operates through a monthly delivery system. Farmers, ranchers and other producers list their available products—which range from peanut butter and honey to grass-fed beef and in-season vegetables—on the Coop website. Members select which items they’d like to receive. At the end of each delivery day, the producers from around the state take these items to be sorted and then delivered to locations throughout the state, where members pick up and pay for their products. The entire operation runs on a volunteer basis, though volunteers are able to earn food credits for their time.

Waldrop, who grew up in Frederick, Okla., says when he grew up, his family and neighbors "were just a few chickens. I love dairy, we just started taking classes," he says. In his yard! Start growing some of your own food, even if it’s just potted herbs.

He learned more about local food while living in Utah during the 1980s as a "fundamentalist" pageantry. He learned about the Church and the role it plays in the community, so he started gardening and began to cook with basic ingredients. After moving to Oklahoma in the early 1990s, he converted to Catholicism and now volunteers at the Holy Family Catholic Worker in Kansas City, where he works with a community of other Catholic families who live as much as they can off the land. The Bennetts began farming with the intent to grow enough to make a living off their hard work. Many large conglomerates such as Tyson sell under-priced cattle ranchers to the point that they have no option but to buy support by the local church.

Brother Joseph quotes his University of Kansas professor, John Sonier, who said, “Knowledge begins with the hands, with a sense of wonder in nature. In order to learn, we have to first say, ‘Oh, you beautiful!’” Our knowledge of creation really leads us to a greater understanding of God.

Melissa and Dean Bennett run Guadalupe Oahe Farm just outside the main gates in Highwood, Okla., near a number of other Catholic families who live as much as they can off the land. The Bennetts began farming with the intent to grow enough to make a living off their hard work. Many large conglomerates such as Tyson sell under-priced cattle ranchers to the point that they have no option but to buy support by the local church.

Though farm work is some of the hardest work there is, it is also immensely rewarding for those involved. Melissa Bennett says, “Whenever I go to bed at night, man, I’m tuckered out, but there is a sense of accomplishment we have here.” Her wife Melissa adds, “You really feel tied to our church, and that’s something they are tied closer to the land.”

Bolíva Waldrop is a freelance writer and math tutor living in Oklahoma City.

By Tina Kerbe Durante

The Sooner Catholic

OKLAHOMA CITY (Nov. 13, 2013) – Judith Huerta is a widow with seven grown-up twin boys that want to call attention to the need for reform of the U.S. immigration system.

Her eyes, vivid behind black-rimmed glasses, are filled with her class rimmed hair. On this particular evening, she looks surprisingly creative in a plaid coat, a leather jacket and beaded nails. She speaks both English and Spanish, learning the language effortlessly.

In a meeting, she sits a grass-colored lever from a coffee table before a camera lens and types vigorously on the keys of her Mac as she relates the origins of her latest idea.

As the moment, she’s preparing to fast for 11 days, one day for each of the estimated million undocumented immigrants who live in the United States. During that time, she’ll pray that elected officials will prioritize family reunification and humane treatment of undocumented immigrants as they work on the current immigration system.

Huerta calls the project, “Hungry 4 Justice.”

She knows firsthand what it is like to live in the U.S. “as a pupusa,” without papers. When she was two years old, her parents and so she crossed from Mexico into the United States even though they lacked the document to do so legally. They settled in California up north. On the Monday before her mom and she moved to Oklahoma. In Oklahoma, a 6-year-old boy named Tom wanted a high school and college education and, in 2012, pursued his college education at the University of Oklahoma. As a result, he added, “I want to help move our great nation toward a more just solution to the situation that keeps so many living in the shadows of our society.

“The Church has a message that highlights the dignity of every human being, the importance of the family and the demands of justice,” he said. “These are rooted in the Gospel but also in reason and the natural law.”

Father Tim Luechen, pastor of Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, also helped to organize the project, school the archbishop.

“Dignity and value is not given by the laws of our country and cannot be taken away by the laws of our country,” he said. “We are called as faithful people of God and followers of our Lord, Jesus Christ, to reach out to strangers, feed the hungry and heal the sick. We see to all people – all people – our neighbor. Helping immigrants who suffer is just one way – the only way – but one way that we reach out to our neighbors in this neighborhood. When immigrants suffer, we, the other members of the body of Christ, suffering. When immigrants find peace and safety, we join in the joy and comfort that comes from that.”

Holding the project’s principles for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City from Friday, Nov. 22, to Monday, Dec. 2, Archbishop Coakley explained. “I want to help local parishes and organizations that provide a prayerful and visible witness, as the U.S. and Canada do every year with fasting, prayers and a procession. In Oklahoma City, Fr. Chapman not only agreed to host the 11-day event at Holy Angels, but he also enlisted the enthusiastic participation of the many law offices in Oklahoma, including Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

For more information about “Hungry 4 Justice,” visit www.archokc.org – from Nov. 23 to Dec. 2. In Oklahoma City, Fr. Chapman not only agreed to host the 11-day event at Holy Angels, but he also enlisted the enthusiastic participation of the many law offices in Oklahoma, including the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

In addition, at 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 24, Father Tim Luechen will lead a multi-ethnic march from an open-to-the-public prayerful procession from the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City to Holy Angels Catholic Church. Archbishop Coakley will bless the Procession.

“Some young people, families and suffering persons are voiceless and invisible in our so-
Center for Family Love hosts flag dedication

Saint Elizabeth students experience 1889 schoolday

Fourth grade students from Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Edmond recently spent a day at the Edmond Territorial Schoolhouse to learn what it would have been like to attend a one-room schoolhouse in 1889. The morning passed quickly with ciphering and recitation. At recess, the students ran sack races, jumped rope and played a game called hoops and graces. The day concluded with a spelling bee and storytelling involving the Oklahoma Land Runs.

How to cook a turkey

Sacred Heart, El Reno, Pre-K class
- "Shock him and then cut it and put it in a pot and put it in the microwave for 3 minutes." - Alfredo Carmona, Jr.
- "Put Glitter on it and put it in the oven for 20 minutes." - Meredith Martinez
- "Put it in the oven for 6 minutes and then put bread on it for my turkey sandwich." - Jude Warren

Sacred Heart, El Reno, Kindergarten class
- "Put it on my daddy’s grill." - Samantha Curtis
- "You put your hand in it to clean it out." - Alan Gonzalez
- "You cook it with fire." - Aleister Wall
- "Put some salt & pepper on it and then put it in the oven for 100 hours." - James Thompson
- "I don’t know, my grandma Lela does it." - Lily Elliot

OKARCHIE, Okla. – The Catholic War Veterans Post 168 and Fourth Degree Knights held a flag dedication ceremony at the Center of Family Love on Saturday, November 10, 2013. The group was led by Commander Roger Thibeault, of the Catholic War Veterans. In the solemn ceremony honoring the raising of a new flag, 25 gathered to witness and share in the dedication that ended with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Knights of Columbus Orders Fourth Degree were also on hand in support of those who serve and those who have served.
O'Reilly vividly retells Christ's crucifixion—but can't compete with the Gospels

Bill O'Reilly

Killing Jesus

by Joseph McAleer

The Catholic Foundation Board of Directors announced a matching Grants Program to individual Catholic schools that establish permanent endowment funds at the Catholic Foundation. Currently, 18 of the 21 schools have custodial operations at the Catholic Foundation. Many of these funds are called endowment funds, and are truly quasi-endowment in nature and owned by the school, as defined by the respective foundation. In 2013, seven Catholic schools within the archdiocese, including Holy Name Academy, received scholarships from the Catholic Foundation Board of Directors, who established a new permanent endowment fund. The Catholic Foundation will match a portion of the initial fund with a grant funded by the proceeds of the 2013 Catholic Foundation Golf Classic.

The purpose of establishing these endowment funds is to benefit the schools with maximum annual distribution, which can also stimulate giving from individuals and foundations.

The Catholic Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, dedicated to the Catholic Church and its missions, and is the fiscal arm of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Benjamin Biddick

about Time

NEW YORK—Parents be warned: Your kids will love “About Time” but may prefer the kitchen menu once they see “Free Birds” (“Relativity,” 2010) as a Sunday school movie. If your kids have the travel bug, they will love “Free Birds” (“Relativity,” 2010) as a Sunday school movie. If your kids have the travel bug, they will love “Free Birds.”

In “About Time,” a young couple who travel back in time to change the course of events and encounters the love of their lives. The movie contains a number of scenes with adult elements, some sacrilegious humor and some adult content.

“Free Birds” is a comedy featuring turkeys (voiced by Owen Wilson, Rachel McAdams, Bill Hader, and Albert Brooks) who travel back in time to change the course of events. The movie contains a number of scenes with adult elements, some sacrilegious humor and some adult content.

Both movies contain a number of scenes with adult elements, some sacrilegious humor and some adult content.

The Catholic News Service classification is “A-4 — limited adult audiences, whose parents would find troubling” for “About Time,” and “A-3 — severe moral, political, spiritual, religious, and/or sexual content that could lead to moral concerns” for “Free Birds.”

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Lánzate a lo más Profundo: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Estrella de la Nueva Evangelización

Sooner Catholic

NOVEMBER 24, 2013

Por Tina Karin Deisz

OKLAHOMA CITY (Nov. 13, 2013) – Judith Chapman, administradora del Centro de la Humanidad y de la Inmigración de Oklahoma City, ha sido reconocida como una de las 120 personas más influyentes del país por la revista U.S. News & World Report. Chapman fue una de 12 mujeres reconocidas por su trabajo en migración y asilo. La revista destacó su trabajo en el Centro de la Humanidad y de la Inmigración de Oklahoma City, donde ha trabajado durante más de 20 años.

Chapman ha sido reconocida por su trabajo en migración y asilo, y su dedicación a la comunidad católica de Oklahoma City. Ha sido nombrada como una de las 120 personas más influyentes del país por la revista U.S. News & World Report. Chapman ha trabajado en el Centro de la Humanidad y de la Inmigración de Oklahoma City, donde ha trabajado durante más de 20 años.

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Go to Mass with Pope Francis and pray for the Church in Oklahoma City in November.

For more information, call Dr. Alex Ruiz at 405-346-7680.

Pope Francis will celebrate the Year of Faith with Mass Nov. 24, the day before the archdiocesan Year of Faith concludes.

In addition, Archbishop Coakley plans to travel to Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Oklahoma County with a charismático event, which will offer a chance to pray, reflect, and become involved in pro-life efforts. More details will be announced in the future.

There have been at least three other trips planned, including one to Rome with the archdiocesan Youth Council and one to Jerusalem.

The Year of Faith is a time for the Church to walk past the veil of the ordinary and celebrate the extraordinary. One of the most extraordinary moments of the Year of Faith is the celebration of the Year of Faith with Mass Nov. 24, the day before the archdiocesan Year of Faith concludes.

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Bishops send ‘special message’ reiterating objections to HHS mandate

By Catholic News Service
BALTIMORE — In a “special message” released Nov. 13, the U.S. bishops reiterated their objections to the Affordable Care Act’s requirement that employee insurance plans include contraceptive coverage and said they remain “united in our resolve to resist this heavy burden and protect our religious freedom.”

The message was released one day after the conclusion of the Nov. 11-12 public portion of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ fall general assembly in Baltimore. The bishops met in executive session Nov. 13.

A media release with the message explained that USCCB regulations regarding statements and publications define a “special message” as a statement, only issued at general meetings, that the general membership considers appropriate in view of the circumstances at the time. It was passed unanimously.

The message opened with a listing of various matters the bishops had dealt with during their assembly, including a response to the Philippine typhoon, some liturgical issues and an update on church assistance to Haiti.

“We must consider as pastors charged with proclaiming the Gospel in its entirety,” it said. “That Gospel calls us to feed the poor, heal the sick and educate the young, and in doing so witness to our faith in its fullness.”

The Constitution and the law protect the church’s freedom to answer that call to serve through various apostolates, the statement said. “Yet with its coercive mandate, the government is refusing to uphold its obligation to respect the rights of religious believers.”

The mandate was issued by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as part of the health care law. It requires most religious and other employers to provide health insurance coverage for contraceptives, sterilization and abortifacient drugs and devices even if the employer is morally opposed to such services. It includes an exemption for some religious employers that fit its criteria. The mandate does not include a conscience clause for employers who object to such coverage on moral grounds.

There also is an accommodation for some employers to use a third party to pay for the objectionable coverage. The bishops’ message recapped the battle between the USCCB and the federal government over the mandate. It reiterated points made in a 2012 statement issued by the USCCB Administrative Committee titled “United for Religious Freedom.”

The special message outlined three objections the bishops still have, including that it establishes what they called “a false architecture of religious liberty that excludes our ministries and so reduces freedom of religion to freedom of worship.” It “compels our ministries” to provide coverage that “violates our deeply held beliefs,” and the bishops said they also object to “our faithful people in business” being required “to act against our teachings, failing to provide them any exemption at all.”

There are multiple lawsuits working their way through the courts that have been filed on behalf of church-related, religious colleges and faith-based institutions as well as for-profit companies.

“Despite our repeated efforts to work and dialogue toward a solution, these problems remain,” the message said.

The bishops’ message observed that the deadline for implementing the HHS mandate is Jan. 1.

“Even as each bishop struggles to address the mandate, together we are striving to develop alternative avenues of response to this difficult situation,” it said. “We seek to answer the Gospel call to serve our moral obligation to provide our people with just health insurance, protect our religious freedom and not be coerced to violate our consciences.”

It said they would continue their efforts “in Congress and especially with the promising initiatives in the courts” to promote “a fuller freedom that ensures our ability to fulfill the Gospel by serving the common good.”