

From the
President's **DESK**

THE CATHOLIC PRESENCE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

October 2012

Dear Friends,

Despite America's long history of defending and supporting religious freedom, the Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, passed earlier this year, has left Christians stunned. This mandate forces employers to supply health insurance that will include abortion, sterilization and contraception without regard to the conflict of conscience this might cause. There is a tremendous need now for Christians to encourage one another and to enter this upcoming Year of Faith (proclaimed by our Holy Father) with a firm belief that we truly *can* evangelize the culture around us.

In addressing the US bishops this past April, Pope Benedict eloquently explained that

at the heart of every culture, whether perceived or not, is a consensus about the nature of reality and the moral good... Today that consensus has eroded significantly in the face of powerful new cultural currents which are not only directly opposed to core moral teachings of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but increasingly hostile to Christianity as such.

It is this slipping away of a common understanding of the moral good that threatens our freedom. Pope Benedict discussed how the cultural trends that have hindered the truth from being taught

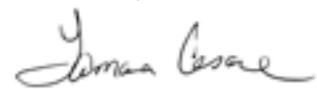
represent a threat not just to Christian faith, but also to humanity itself and to the deepest truth about our being and ultimate vocation, our relationship to God. When a culture attempts... to close the doors to transcendent truth, it inevitably becomes impoverished and falls prey, as the late Pope John Paul II so clearly saw, to reductionist and totalitarian readings of the human person and the nature of society.

False notions of truth and freedom have fueled a radical individualism that judges everything according to personal reaction. This intense focus on self has actually distanced people from a true vision of self as God intended us to be; nature becomes whatever feels right, and freedom becomes the ability to act on every passing desire.

The Church's defense of a moral reasoning based on the natural law is grounded on her conviction that this law is not a threat to our freedom, but rather a "language" which enables us to understand ourselves and the truth of our being, and so to shape a more just and humane world. She thus proposes her moral teaching as a message not of constraint but of liberation, and as the basis for building a secure future.

The recent Symposium on International Religious Freedom, which was called for by our bishops in Washington, DC, outlined the rise of religious unrest and the loss of religious rights worldwide. As Catholics in the world, we can and must have an impact on the culture around us. Pope Benedict's words ring so clear: **"There can be no doubt that a more consistent witness on the part of America's Catholics to their deepest convictions would make a major contribution to the renewal of society as a whole."**

God bless your families and your efforts,



Mrs. Tamara Cesare,
President

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Catholics United for Life  New Hope, KY 40052

Religious Freedom Today

Global persecution

People all over the world are literally in a deadly tug-of-war over religious rights and freedoms. Even America itself has come to the point of forcing its citizens to support acts that go against basic Christian beliefs, creating a sinkhole that is devouring our freedom and human dignity as people created by and for God.

The 2012 Symposium on International Religious Freedom, convened just this September in Washington, DC by the US bishops, brought the sobering news that 70% of the world's population—the majority of them being Christians—lives in countries where religious freedoms are significantly limited.

*“According to the International Society for Human Rights, 150,000 Christians are killed for their faith every year, meaning we have **seventeen new martyrs every hour of every day.**”*

*Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Symposium on International
Religious Freedom*

Freedom of speech

Despite our own struggles, we Americans have to consider the freedoms and security we

still *do* enjoy. We cannot forget that with each freedom we have, there is a corresponding responsibility to exercise and protect our freedom. The fact that we as Americans have a right to speak, compels us to speak. We must press forward in using and protecting these rights, because we are so close to losing many of them.

Our commitment to religious freedom is what will build a strong and effective example for the world. By fighting here at home, we give hope to others as well as strengthening our own commitment as a country to truly fight for respect for religious freedom. After all, if we don't support basic freedoms of conscience in our own country, how can we be effective in supporting rights internationally?

Our presence on the scene is vital

It was the constant *presence* of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s that transformed a culture in amazing ways. Pope Benedict assures us that our efforts to create a Catholic *presence* do contribute to a renewal of a moral culture. Each of us must take our own situation into account and determine what level of *presence* we can contribute.



(Art: *The Decapitation of Sts. Cosmas and Damian*, Bl. Fra Angelico)
The community of nations owes a debt of gratitude to all the “martyrs” for religious freedom. Their sufferings have sounded the alarm for the entire human family. As Saint Paul writes of the Church, “If [one] part [of the body] suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.”

*Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Symposium on International Religious Freedom*

LiVE

Differently!

How do you live differently? As Catholic families we are called to raise our children in the faith, to be the first teachers, to be the “little church.” Catholics United for Life wants to collect and share your ideas and traditions. Help weave the Catholic culture into everyday life — email your ideas, traditions and photos to catholicsunitedforlife@gmail.com with the phrase “Live Differently” in the subject line.

Thank you to **Lorrie Kenney**, a young Catholic mother of three girls, for sharing her All Hallows' Eve traditions!

I love All Hallows' Eve because it gives our family a great opportunity to learn about new saints and to celebrate favorite ones, pray for all souls, visit a cemetery, and spread the origins of the tradition of “Halloween” among neighbors, family and friends. We decorate the home with images of saints, as well as of deceased loved ones. We choose saints to dress up as. We print off little cards with a bit of history on one side and “Thank you for the treats! We will pray for your deceased loves ones” on the other side, which we pass out as we go door to door, saying, “Prayers for treats!”

The past three years, we have joined other Catholic families to celebrate All Hallows' Eve with a party filled with saint activities and games, children sharing stories of their saint in character, and always ending with a Litany of the Saints and family rosary by a bonfire. On All Souls' Day, we take flowers to a cemetery and offer prayers for the souls. Our kids love placing a flower on the empty tombstones as a visual reminder that we have especially prayed for the “forgotten” souls. It is a fun, joyous, religious occasion to remind each of us that our mission on this earth is militant, and we are fighting for salvation of our souls and all souls. (As a side note, we are careful to educate our children that we do not wish to celebrate “evil,” though we recognize that evil exists; so there are no witches or ghouls or black cats here!)



An Articulate and Well-Formed Catholic Laity

In Benedict's April 2012 address to the American bishops, he identified the "need for an *engaged, articulate and well-formed Catholic laity* endowed with a *strong critical sense*...with the *courage to counter* reductive secularism..." [emphasis added].

In a culture riddled with confusion about what true freedom of religion is, it can be difficult to be articulate in our arguments or even our own thoughts.

Consider the progressive transformation of the meanings of words and ideas. In the first place, "tolerance" of evil is never good. We don't "tolerate" slavery, holocausts or violence against the innocent. However, *tolerance*, which used to mean "indulge," has now come to mean "to accept" or "support."



This disconnect from basic moral goodness leaves our leaders in education, lawmaking and the news media with huge inconsistencies in their logic that lead to general confusion. Despite this confusion, we must be confident in our position that our freedom to act upon our beliefs is a long-standing American tradition.

Deeply-Held Traditions of Freedom

The recent French law banning face coverings is one issue that has stirred a lot of conversation about religious liberties. It has also highlighted the inability of many to be consistent in their logic. The debate confirms, even from the lips of those who would not agree with our rights to follow our Catholic consciences, that the freedom to live one's beliefs is a deeply-held American tradition.

Martha Nussbaum reported on this French law for ABC News, questioning what it means to treat people with equal re-

spect, saying, "...*the faculty with which people search for life's ultimate meaning — frequently called 'conscience' — is a very important part of people, closely related to their dignity.*" [Emphasis added]

In Nussbaum's discussion of different historic views of religious freedom, she pointed to John Locke's view (a British philosopher whose ideas on law and freedom greatly influenced our Founding Fathers) that laws should "not penalize religious belief," and to the need for laws that are "non-discriminatory..." But this line of thought goes even farther with Roger Williams (an early proponent of religious freedom) who expressed the conviction that ends up dominating law and culture, as she says, throughout US history — namely, *accommodation*.

Equal vs. Ample Liberty

According to the assessment of Williams, we believe not just in "equal liberty," but in "ample liberty"; we believe that exemptions from the military draft on religious grounds, or accommodations for your dietary needs on an airplane, for example, should be met both in law *and* in culture.

We, the people of America, not only respect one's rights to gather and worship; we *accommodate* those of faith, in order that they might act on their beliefs as well as hold them.

However, Nussbaum is talking about a law concerning face coverings in another country. Strangely, in the media this fervor for accommodation for religious convictions does not seem to warrant the same attention or depth of thought when it comes to American laws that force people to pay for abortions and contraception against their consciences.

Please read on the back page of this newsletter a story of an American Catholic teen who had the courage Pope Benedict is calling for, the "... the courage to counter reductive secularism..."

As faithful citizens, we are called to vote!

The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable. The Catholic call to faithful citizenship

affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation. As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong;

we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths. We are called to bring together our principles and our political choices, our values and our votes, to help build a better world.

Faithful Citizenship
Catholic Bishops of the United States



Amy Lucas

Amy's Story

Amy is a 17-year-old who attends public school and took part in our annual youth conference, Ignite Your Torch, this past summer. She might have been tempted

to believe that she, in her limited situation, could not make an impact on the culture around her, but she fought that temptation. If we do nothing today but convince one person that Christ truly matters in their life, we have transformed a piece of our culture. Read how Amy recently took a courageous stand for her rights and her beliefs.

Ignite literally changed my life. I came to Ignite Your Torch not really knowing what it was about, and in the state of mind that I was getting farther away from my Church. The first day my church group was there, we still weren't really sure how we felt about it. Then the second day came with all the workshops, general assemblies, and group talks, and I realized how much fun it was and how much this was getting me closer to God. Throughout the whole trip I learned so much more than I already knew about myself and my connection with God.

We had the most inspiring speakers and met the most amazing people. The workshops were so amazing that I never wanted them to end. By the end of the conference, I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay and share my love of God with others who felt the same way. Leaving was hard, but I definitely knew I'd be back next year.

Returning to school, I was afraid I was going to go back to my old ways and lose the "Jesus high" that I had leaving Ignite. One thing I decided to do was wear my pro-life shirt that I had received from the conference, to school. I was a

little nervous knowing that I would hear some comments about it, because I go to a public school. But I decided to wear it anyway to stand up for what I believe in and to show I'm not afraid to show I'm pro-life and I'm Catholic.

About an hour into my first class, we were about to leave to go to our second class when a teacher came up to me and asked me for my name. I stated my name. Then the teacher rudely asked me why I was wearing that shirt. He told me I shouldn't wear it to school because it was my personal and political opinion and it wasn't right. I then stated that it was my right to wear that shirt and state my personal opinion. The teacher gave me a disgusted look, asked for my full name, and left. I had never been so offended and disrespected in my life against my religion or my personal opinion. It upset me that a teacher who was supposed to set an example and encourage kids to have opinions, would tell me something so disrespectful.

Knowing I had stood up for what I believed in made me so proud of myself. I knew that what I had learned at Ignite about not being afraid to show who I was or what I believed in impacted my life. All of this made me realize what kind of world we live in. No matter where I was, someone would always have an opinion different from mine. It had me thinking a lot about how I saw myself in this world.

Because of this, I came out a stronger person than I was before, and I know if I continue to show what I believe in and to spread my knowledge to other peers, it will rub off on more people, making the world a better place to live in.

I hope sharing my story will impact more people to also give them the courage to stand up for what they believe in.



Catholics United for Life holds the Ignite Your Torch youth conference annually. Young people from across the country come to join men and women religious and lay volunteers to pray and take part in the sacraments and learn about their faith.

For more information, visit www.catholicsunitedforlife.org or call 1-800-764-8444

Thirty-nine years and counting!

We need your help. *Please make a generous donation to CUL today!*

The upcoming new year marks the 39th year for the work of Catholics United for Life. CUL was our response to *Roe v. Wade*. We haven't stopped working and will not stop. But what we are able to do is measured by the generosity of many faithful pro-life people like you.

More than ever, we need your support to continue speaking the truth about life — defending our right to do so has never been more urgent. We need your support to provide "life-changing" events like Ignite Your Torch and many other projects which, over the past four decades, have provided alternatives to abortion, exposed the truth about abortion and contraception, defended marriage, promoted sexual morality, given legal assistance for religious liberty, and provided solid education according to the teachings of our Catholic faith.

CUL is the apostolate of the St. Martin de Porres Lay Dominican Community, a lifetime commitment to truth and evangelization. God bless you.



Zeb Stearns



Aja Mitchell