Pope Francis’ Love Letter Invites Deeper Reflection on the Beauty of Marriage and Christ’s Teaching, USCCB President Says

April 8, 2016

WASHINGTON—Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, Kentucky, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, welcomed Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, Amoris Laetitia, on love in the family. Pope Francis' "love letter to families" invites everyone to grow as members of the family of God, Archbishop Kurtz said April 8.

A Statement from Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz of Louisville, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: Today I joyfully welcome Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love), the much anticipated post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis.

“The value of a human life, and the right to life of an innocent child growing in the mother’s womb, that no alleged right to one’s own body can justify a decision to terminate that life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the ‘property’ of another human being. The family protects human life in all its stages, including its last.” Amoris Laetitia No. 83

The pope has given us a love letter to families—a love letter inviting all of us, and especially married couples and families, to never stop growing in love. It is also a love letter calling the Church, the family of God, to realize more and more her mission to live and love as a family. Pope Francis is calling us to enter more deeply into the beauty of marriage and Christ's teaching. From the opening lines of Genesis to the closing chapter of Revelation, and throughout the Gospels, God speaks eloquently to us about the joys and challenges of marriage and family life.

The Holy Father is giving us an active opportunity to reflect upon how each of us can belong more deeply to Christ. The Joy of Love is inviting us to share the treasure and medicine of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus inspires us to live out God's hope for us, and the mercy of Jesus heals and sustains us when we fall short. Let us remember that no obstacle is too big for Christ to overcome.

I encourage all to read and reflect on how the words of Pope Francis can be applied in our lives, in our families, and in our society. I am grateful once again to our Holy Father for encouraging and leading us in our call to encounter Jesus ever more deeply, especially in the great gift of family life, and to be His missionary disciples in the world.
FROM THE DIRECTOR

There is a condition many people express to me about themselves. They tell me they are afraid. The fear is common, but the focus of the fear may vary. Fear is part of being human, but when fear becomes overwhelming we become stifled.

I hear that people are afraid that something terrible, often only vaguely described, will happen and devastate them and their loved ones. Their fear is often tied to issues going on in the world today. Some fear is focused on what the media calls “enemy combatants.” Other people fear that our medical profession is becoming more and more unethical leading to the shortening of fellow human beings lives. There are people who fear scarcity due to the environment as it is being felt by some communities already and the possibility of many more in the future. And there are so many more worries out there.

Often these fears focus on some person or persons who may have the power to instigate these objects of the fear. These could be an individual, a corporation, a social institution or many other person(s) whom the fear is projected onto. Sometimes the word “enemy” is used and sometimes it is implied. This personalizes the focus of the fear on another person(s).

When we engage in ministry related to life issues, we can get distracted and forget what Jesus taught us. Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” Ministry has a different framework. We are called to love perpetrators and victims. Not to support immoral behavior but love them to open their hearts to conversion and the great love only Jesus can give.

In a recent homily Pope Francis reflected on the teaching of Jesus. Recalling his own childhood in Argentina, when people prayed that dictators would go to hell, the Pope recalled how Jesus himself tells us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. The Holy Father says it this way, “Indifference and hostility can blind Christians from recognizing Jesus in those most in need.”

So what is the antidote to transform fear into love? I read a quote that wasn’t annotated this week that really sums up the answer. It said, “Let your faith be bigger than your fear.” Our faith grows in prayer, so prayer can increase our faith and then fear may loosen its grip a bit.

Ministry drawn from anger is not true ministry because ministry is carrying on the work of Jesus. Yes Jesus disapproved of things going on in His society, but he ministered with love and compassion. This means our prayer life, our communication with God, must be consistent. It is this relationship that will lead us out of fear in our ministry to hope and faith in the One who is all love.

Peggy Gerovac

Food for Thought

Scott Rains, disability-rights activist

My own decision to become publicly active in the prolife movement was, I admit, rather selfish. I followed the news stories while a newborn child was starved at an Indiana hospital because he was born with Down's syndrome. The years I had spent fighting for federal architectural standards, for equal access and equal employment suddenly didn't make sense. If the new strategy was to eliminate those of us with disabilities at birth, then that was where I would stand up for our rights. . . . Having looked at the world with the perspective of a man with a physical disability, I saw an attitude - and a mechanism - of oppression, as tangible as racism, that held people like myself at the margins of society . . . If being open to the experience of one's disability can lead to action in the prolife movement, what about in the peace movement? A disabled veteran of Vietnam is not likely to have a romanticized idea of war. The disabled children of hibakusha (survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) don't need to ask if it is a sin to build nuclear weapons.
The Role of Mercy (from Ethics & Medics June 2016)

Kathryn E. Harvey, director of adult ministries at several parishes in Archdiocese of Milwaukee

Currently, the Catholic Church is celebrating the Jubilee Year of Mercy, called for by Pope Francis. The Holy Father points out that two of the qualities of God manifested in the Hebrew Scriptures are patience and mercy. In the New Testament, “Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us.” God has shown mercy and love to God’s people from the beginning of salvation history and has invited all people to do the same for each other.

For those who are experiencing health and bioethical concerns, a merciful approach is ideal, especially coming from the Church and from local communities. The best way to accomplish this is through the works of mercy. The spiritual works of mercy include counseling the doubtful, instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, comforting the sorrowful, bearing wrongs patiently, forgiving, and praying for the living and the dead. Additionally, the corporal works of mercy include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting and ransoming captives, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, and burying the dead.

Pope Francis invites the entire Catholic community to extend and live in a merciful manner when he says, “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love...Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instills in us the courage to look to the future with hope.”

1Francis, Misericordiae vultus, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (April 11, 2015), n.6.
2Ibid., n. 9.
3Ibid., n. 10.

Is someone you know struggling with Miscarriage or Early Childhood Loss?

The Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas offers a handbook for Parents, which includes information on honoring the life of their child, as well as prayers, answers to challenging questions, and other resources to help them through this difficult time. While it does contain information related to services available to Kansas City residents, it is also a valuable resource for any family.

To order the booklets, please call 913.721.1570.

Bishop Lennon will preside over a closing Mass at 10am on Monday, July 4th at the Cathedral.

For more information, check out Fortnight4Freedom.org.
What Can and Cannot Be Donated

The National Catholic Bioethics Center

WASHINGTON—What organs may be ethically transplanted from one living donor to another? The vascularized composite allograft (VCA) list, set forth by the Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN), establishes the standards for the American transplant community. It is meant to be a comprehensive list of treatments, covering everything from the smallest cosmetic skin grafts to entire heart transplants. Until recently, the list reflected sound ethics. Kidney transplantation, for example, performed with all the amenities of modern medicine, presents a small but manageable risk to donor and recipient and poses few if any moral problems.

As of July 3, 2013, however, an expansion of the VCA list has been a cause for concern. The new document adds organs “including, but not limited to, uterus, internal/external male and female genitalia, [and] urinary bladder.” The implicit inclusion of ovarian and testicular tissue opens the door to eugenic uses of transplantation and, when paired with new genetic technologies, is likely to affect the human gene pool as well as the human genome in unforeseen ways. The new proposal also implicitly endorses living uterus donations, which will further complicate current ethical and legal issues involving surrogacy and parental rights. In addition, a transplanted uterus will achieve pregnancy only through in vitro fertilization, requiring the loss of countless embryos.

The transplantation of a uterus or genitalia would involve serious and irreparable impairment of a living donor. Given that there is currently no known shortage of deceased-donor VCAs, the OPTN offers no sufficient justification for its radical new proposal.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center and the National Catholic Partnership on Disability have taken issue with the most recent VCA proposal from the OPTN, which seems more concerned with a political agenda than with the health of patients. As it currently stands, the VCA list not only allows the irreversible mutilation of healthy donors but also ignores potential hazards for recipients and their future offspring. The original OPTN mandate “to protect living donor safety” is ignored. In virtually all cases, the benefit of living donation for the recipient is merely a shorter waiting time.
Cardinal Parolin to Humanitarian Summit: Human Dignity Transcends Politics (excerpts)

May 24, 2016 - Kathleen Naab - Zenit.org

Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin addressed the first World Humanitarian Summit, emphasizing that human dignity has to be at the heart of every response to the world’s difficulties.

In his address he emphasized Pope Francis’ support for the idea of convening this First World Humanitarian Summit, “hoping that it may succeed in its goal of placing the person and human dignity at the heart of every humanitarian response, in a common commitment, which can decisively eliminate the culture of waste and disregard for human life, so that no one will be neglected or forgotten, and that no further lives will be sacrificed due to the lack of resources and, above all, the lack of political will.”

“The human person should be the aim of any and every humanitarian action. This transcends politics and is ipso facto indispensable, even, and especially, in cases of disasters and conflicts. In our highly interconnected world, the use of force and armed conflicts affect, in different ways, all nations and peoples. No one is spared. A culture of dialogue and cooperation should be the norm in dealing with the world’s difficulties. Heavy reliance on military intervention and selfish economic policies is short-sighted, counter-productive and never the right solution for these challenges.

Highlighting that the Holy See has long embraced this vision, he reaffirmed the following commitments: The Holy See is committed to fostering, through “informal and formal diplomacy”, a culture of peace, active solidarity and full respect for inherent human dignity, built also on dynamic interreligious dialogue, ever convinced that religions must be a positive force in preventing and ending conflicts.

The Holy See is committed to employing its resources to encourage schools and social institutions to educate for peace and inclusive societies, which are essential to prevent conflicts.

The Holy See is committed to contributing to the collective work to prevent humanitarian crises in which disarmament can play a significant role in ensuring a peaceful coexistence among Nations, as well as social cohesion within them; it will never tire working towards nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, banning antipersonnel mines and cluster munitions, as well as preventing the expansion and deployment of new weapons systems such as lethal autonomous weapons systems.

Finally, citing Pope Francis’ address to popular movements in Bolivia last July, he said, “The Holy See believes that the primary commitment and goal of the international community must be the prevention of conflicts, by investing in sustainable and integral development that leaves no one behind, no matter how small, so as to have no family without lodging, no rural worker without land, no labourer without rights, no people without sovereignty, no individual without dignity, no child without childhood, no young person without a future, no elderly person without a venerable old age.”

“Having articulated the immense challenge before us”, he concluded, “the Holy See remains committed to doing its part to save lives and spare future generations from the scourges of war.”

SAVE THE DATE!

The Infertility Journey: You are Not Alone

A day long seminar discussing the struggles of infertility from a Catholic perspective.

Saturday, November 12, 2016
9am-4pm (Lunch provided)
St. Basil Catholic Church
Cost: $20

- Creighton Model Fertility Care System: Faithful, Effective Fertility Management Dr. Chris Stroud MD OB/GYN
- Theological and Pastoral Perspectives Speaker TBA
- Coping with Grief and Loss Jason Lewis

For more information, contact:
The Department for Marriage and Family Ministry
Kathy Patton 216-334-2973 kapatton@ccdocle.org
Where Mercy Meets Faithfulness

from Spring 2016 Lumina newsletter

It is the point of healing. The joining of ultimate pain with ultimate love. An act of complete trust and surrender, a climbing on to the cross with Christ—there to join mercy with faithfulness.

I can remember the struggles of faithfulness, the searching in the dark to find God, the holding on to His Word because I had tried everything else and I longed to be healed. The movement in spite of the pain, the darkness, the fear, because there was nothing to lose...there could be no greater hell than the one I had made for myself.

I begged and pleaded with God reminding Him of His promises, in spite of me. I worked at chipping my remains away; fighting myself so I could reach a complete surrender.

There were many times when I needed encouragement to continue, to resist my temptations and bouts with despair.

There were times when I felt I couldn’t go on, but God provided the people necessary to give me the push that I needed, the words I had to hear, and the strength to hang on.

I continually pleaded for the saints’ intercession and especially entrusted myself to Mary and Joseph.

And finally, one day alone with Jesus, because He is the only one on who can heal, I trusted enough to climb on the cross, to be one with the pain and love that exists there and to allow that love to fill the deep wounds that I had.

There, His mercy met my faithfulness and I finally felt healed of my abortion. I suddenly understood so much of scripture. So much of it was then fulfilled in me, such a gift given. I felt like Mary Magdalene at the foot of the cross. Immense love had taken on immense sin and had washed away its stain.

To be sure, the process of healing from abortion is painful and delicate, but with the right help and trust in God even if not “felt,” it is possible. Jesus in His Mercy longs to heal us. We in our faithfulness need to persevere.

We believe that society should do more for the mothers, so women don’t have to live like men just to get an education or a job.

Carol Anne Kemp
Blogger at For Every Mom
WASHINGTON—Today, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a per curiam opinion in the case of Zubik v. Burwell, in which Catholic and other religious organizations are challenging the HHS mandate requiring them to facilitate health insurance coverage of sterilization, contraception, and drugs and devices that may cause abortions.

The Court unanimously vacated the decisions before it, remanding the cases to the lower courts with instructions to afford the parties the opportunity to work out an alternative approach to the mandate. In the meantime, the Court forbade the government from imposing taxes or penalties on the organizations for failure to provide the required "notice" and "certification" or otherwise to trigger the "accommodation."

Archbishop Joseph E. Kurtz, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, offered the following statement in response: I am encouraged by today’s unanimous decision of the Supreme Court. It wipes away the bad decisions that so many of our charitable ministries were appealing, it maintains hope that we might resolve this dispute finally and favorably sometime in the future, and in the meantime, it prevents the Administration from issuing crippling fines against those who object.

I take this occasion to reiterate the unity and resolve that the bishops of the United States have expressed repeatedly in opposition to the HHS mandate, such as in their Special Message from 2013 and their statement "United for Religious Freedom" from 2012. I also recall the encouragement that we have received from Pope Francis in this regard during his recent apostolic visit to the United States, first by his remarks at the White House, and then by his personal visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor.

Speaking about religious liberty from the White House in September, Pope Francis said "that freedom remains one of America’s most precious possessions. And, as my brothers, the United States Bishops, have reminded us, all are called to be vigilant, precisely as good citizens, to preserve and defend that freedom from everything that would threaten or compromise it."

In light of this, USCCB will continue its opposition to the HHS mandate in all three branches of government. We are grateful to the Supreme Court for the opportunity to continue that effort. We remain convinced that, as a nation, we do not wish to push people of faith and their ministries out of charitable work – under threat of severe government fines – or leave freedom of religion protected only in private worship.

Women went to church while getting abortions
afaJournal February 2016

Nearly half of women who have had abortions report that they attended church at the time, according to LifeWay Research. A 2015 study found that 43% of women who had abortions were attending monthly.

However, 76% say their church had no influence in the decision to have an abortion, and 52% say nobody at church knew they had aborted a baby.

Only 7% shared their decision with someone at church. A majority felt the church is not prepared to help with unplanned pregnancies and they feared judgment, gossip and inaccurate advice about pregnancy options from the church.
Respect Life Month October 2016
“Moved by Mercy”
The Respect Life Program begins anew each year on Respect Life Sunday, the first Sunday in October. The USCCB Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities publishes new materials each year to call attention to numerous human life issues. These materials are especially helpful for priests, parish groups, schools, and other organizations.

Check their website for updated material for 2016!

http://www.usccb.org/respect_life

The 3rd Quarter “For Life” will publish a special insert announcing 2016 Respect Life Events. Does your parish or group have something planned to commemorate October as Respect Life month? If so, submit your information by September 1 to: Peggy Gerovac at pmgerovac@ccdocle.org or mail to Peggy at the Office for Human Life (address below).

Reminder from the Diocesan Legal Office
Parish Right to Life donations (ie. Flower sales) should go to a 501(c)3, not a 501(c)4. The Church cannot donate to lobbying efforts.

PLEASE CONTACT US TO POST YOUR VOLUNTEER NEEDS AND UPCOMING EVENTS.
ALL OF OUR ADS CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE FOR PARISH USE!

Contact Us

For Life is a quarterly publication and educational service of the Office for Human Life of the Diocese of Cleveland.

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“Project Rachel, the Catholic Church’s ministry to those who have been involved in abortion, is a diocesan-based network of specially trained priests, religious, counselors, and laypersons who provide a team response of care for those suffering in the aftermath of abortion. In addition to referring for Sacramental Reconciliation, the ministry provides an integrated network of services, including pastoral counseling, spiritual direction, and referrals to mental health professionals. Support groups and retreats may be offered in addition to individualized care.”

Please call 216-334-2966!

If you would like to include this in your bulletin, you can find the file at our website under Pastoral Care, Project Rachel.

If you would like to receive more periodic emails & the digital version of ‘For Life’...

Please send your e-mail address to:

pmgerovac@ccdocle.org