

## Work

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in the bishops' "Program of Social Reconstruction" that called for a "levy" on industry to provide insurance against illness. In his encyclical "On Human Work," Pope John Paul II spoke about social benefits needed to ensure the life and health of workers and their families. He said that because of the "expenses involved" in providing health care, it should be "easily available for workers" at low cost or even no cost.

### Work and Welfare

There is a vital and developing discussion on how to "end welfare as we know it." Most policy-makers, participants in the welfare system and observers agree that work is often the key to welfare reform. However, their perspectives and priorities often diverge. Some see work as a "penalty" while others see the requirement to work as a way to simply reduce the welfare rolls. A Catholic perspective sees it very differently. Those who can work, should work. Work is not a way you "pay off" welfare assistance, rather it is the means to secure a decent life for your family. And loving care for one's children is also an important form of work. Our Catholic tradition includes several key principles: the right to decent work, to earn a living wage (i.e., sufficient to support a family), and to organize and participate in economic life. In an economy where millions are looking for work and cannot find it, these principles demand that real welfare reform be more than lectures about responsibility or training for jobs that don't exist.

Pope John Paul II said in "Centesimus Annus": "The obligation to earn one's bread by the sweat of one's brow also presumes the right to do so. A society in which this right is systematically denied, in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satis-

factory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can the society attain social peace." (No. 43) Public and private policies that help create decent jobs at decent wages should be the first priority for economic policy and welfare reform. Unemployment and the lack of decent jobs destroy families and communities across our land. It disproportionately touches African-American and Hispanic workers, who are much more likely to be actively looking for jobs and unable to find them. Full employment remains the most fundamental economic and social objective for our society.

### Women and Work

Any reflection on the changing nature of work, even one as brief as this, would be remiss if it did not comment on the changing "face" of workers, that is, the number of women that are now present in the work force. Many women work outside the home for a variety of interrelated reasons: to provide necessary income for their families, to express their dignity and to use their talents for the common good. In fact, many of the issues mentioned above are directly related to women workers. Women are disproportionately in low-wage, low-benefit jobs. They are more likely to lack health care insurance, and to head single-parent households. Welfare reform and health care reform will greatly affect the lives of poor and low-income working women and their children. In "Putting Children and Families First," the bishops acknowledge the "struggle to balance work and family responsibilities" among working mothers. Catholic teaching advocates for family-friendly public policies that help women and men balance work and family responsibilities, as well as social, economic and tax policies that would make it possible for women to do the important work of raising children and providing a home for their families if they choose to do so on a full-time basis.

In "Putting Children and Families First,"

the bishops reiterate their call from "Economic Justice for All," for proposals that would "correct the disparities in men's and women's wages," and to support legislation that would protect women from "discrimination in hiring and promotions." These concerns echo words in "On Human Work" where Pope John Paul II urges that women should be able to work "without being discriminated against."

### Conclusion

In "On Human Work," Pope John Paul II says that if the solution to the social question is to "make life more human," then human work is a key element of that solution. Since work continues to be at the heart of today's solutions, we must recover our Catholic teaching on work and apply it to today's social questions. Forces that seek to deny labor its intrinsic value and workers their dignity and rights are still present. In the search for needed reform of welfare, health care, and trade policy, we must not sacrifice the gains that workers have made over the last half century or ignore their consequences for vulnerable workers. The best social welfare program is still a decent job with decent pay and benefits.

As we approach the 10th anniversary of "Economic Justice for All" in 1996, let us renew our search for new forms of cooperation and partnership, participation and responsibility in labor management relations. We need to constantly assess our public policies and economic decisions for their effect on family life, the poor and marginalized workers. We must recommit ourselves to the defense of human dignity, and the right of every person to share in the economic life of our nation. Let us remember most of all, those who are without decent work on this Labor Day. The first priority of a just economic life is to find a way to use the talents and energy of all those willing and able to work.



AP/Wide World Photos

More than 3,000 paramilitary recruits Aug. 26 marched in front of military headquarters in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, as a show of force against a possible U.S.-led invasion for military leaders' refusal to step down.

### Hope, skepticism over Gore's Cairo remarks

WASHINGTON — Two U.S. bishops expressed optimism, while two pro-life organizations responded with skepticism, over Vice President Al Gore's remarks that the United States will not seek a worldwide right to abortion at the upcoming International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt. Gore said the United States would seek changes in the conference's draft document to reflect administration thinking. The Clinton administration "has not sought, does not seek and will not seek to establish any international right to an abortion," he said.

### Sister McCarthy resigns as leader of Pax Christi

ERIE, Pa. — Benedictine Sister Anne McCarthy has resigned as national coordinator of Pax Christi U.S.A., the Erie-based U.S. branch of the international Catholic peace movement. Her resignation, effective Aug. 31, was announced at the Pax Christi national assembly meeting in mid-August in San Jose, Calif. In her statement to the assembly, Sister McCarthy said she was leaving mainly "because of organizational questions, growing issues around the role of the executive committee, national council, national coordinator and ownership of the agendas of Pax Christi."

### Planning continues for pope's trip to Sarajevo

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II and Vatican diplomats continue preparing for a Sept. 8 visit to the Serb-besieged Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, despite U.N. worries about the pope's safety, said Vatican officials. Papal spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said the pope is working on his speeches. Other trip organizers said Vatican diplomats are in daily contact with U.N. officials in former Yugoslavian republics and at U.N. headquarters in New York concerning papal security. The United Nations would be primarily responsible for the pope's safety and would make the decision whether security permitted the pope's plane to land at the Sarajevo airport Sept. 8.

Compiled from Catholic News Service reports.

## The Catholic Physicians Guild The St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild & St. Mary's Hospital

present

### A Medical Ethics Seminar

## THE YEAR OF THE WOMAN: A CELEBRATION

All Are Invited

A discussion concerning issues related to women's health

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### SPEAKERS

- Rev. Jack Healy:** Veritatis splendor and the morality of human actions
- John Willke, M.D.:** Abortion and breast cancer
- Beverly McMillin, M.D.:** Abortion; a view from an ex-abortionist
- Dr. Joyce Little:** Trinitarianism and egalitarianism
- Mr. John Regan Jr.:** RICO and abortion protest
- Mother Mary Agnes Donovan:** The sisters of life, a new religious order promoting life

**When:** Saturday, September 17, 9 am  
**Where:** St. Mary's Hospital, 89 Genesee Street, Rochester  
**Cost:** \$15

*A pro life buffet dinner will be held the Saturday evening of the seminar at 6:00 pm at the Mapledale Party House*

**Cost: \$20, dinner only; both events \$30 (children under 18 half price)**

**Make checks payable to the Catholic Physicians Guild  
Send to: W. Stewart Beecher, M.D., 106 Gregory Park Condo, Rochester, NY 14620**