

WORLD & NATION

CHA details health goals

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Catholic Health Association Jan. 13 urged a steppingstone strategy to reach the goal of universal health coverage in the United States.

Father Michael D. Place, CHA president and chief executive officer, proposed for starters cutting the current 44 million Americans without health care coverage by at least one-third over the next three years.

The CHA was one of eight major national organizations involved in health care issues whose top leaders convened at the National Press Club for a daylong meeting, "Health Coverage 2000: Meeting the Challenge of the Uninsured."

About 300 health-care leaders and journalists packed the press club ballroom for the event. It was also carried to a national audience by live video on the Internet. Conference reports, texts and videos are available at the Web site: www.rwjf.org/events/hc2000.html.

Despite divergent views among some of the groups on basic issues connected with any health insurance reform proposal, their leaders expressed strong agreement that reforms are needed to reverse the rapid increase of uninsured Americans.

"It is a catastrophe," said Father Place, "that the number of uninsured and underinsured in this nation is increasing by nearly a million a year — at a time when our national economy is vigorous and unemployment is at its lowest level in three decades."

He set out five essential components of what he termed "a deliberate and sequential strategy" to improve the current system and set the stage for eventual universal coverage:

- Requiring states to expand eligibility for Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover "all persons below 150 percent of the federal poverty level."

- Subsidies for low- to middle-income people to pay two-thirds of their premiums for health insurance, providing such a subsidy to those without employer coverage "only if they purchase their coverage through an expanded Federal Employee Health Benefits Program."

- Expanding the federal employees' program to create a parallel set of new group insurance programs for people who are not federal employees but who do not have access to group insurance through their employer.

- "An outreach and enrollment initiative" targeting those already eligible for Medicaid or the children's health program, making it easier to enroll and opening coverage to children of legal immigrants and pregnant women.

- A \$500-million-a-year initiative to "strengthen the health care safety net" by aid for better uninsured care among the health providers which serve the homeless and other vulnerable uninsured populations.

On the expansion of the federal employees' program to form group plans for millions of people currently uninsured, Father Place said: "Restricting subsidies to only those who participate in (that program) would encourage all eligible persons to obtain their coverage through the program. This would prevent adverse selection into the program by attracting both low- and high-cost individuals."

Archbishop asks families to evangelize

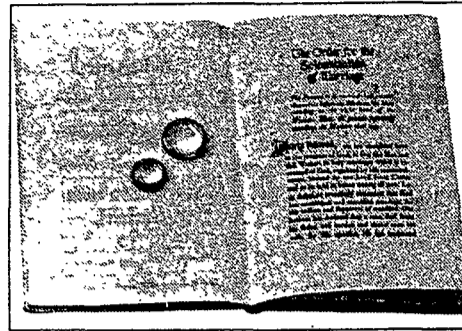
By Paul Schratz
Catholic News Service

SURREY, British Columbia — Catholic families tempted to withdraw from an alien culture should remember they are called to help evangelize the world, not retreat from it, said Denver Archbishop Charles J. Chaput.

Archbishop Chaput told the Archdiocese of Vancouver's 1999 family conference that just as families do not spend their whole life in the sanctuary of the church, they cannot spend their whole life in the sanctuary of the family.

"While we should never be conformed to the world, neither do we have a license to condemn it or withdraw from it. Family as sanctuary does not mean family as fortified enclave. We can't convert the world unless we engage it. We can't be leaven if we remove ourselves from the recipe," he said.

Archbishop Chaput was keynote speaker at the mid-November conference, "The Family as a Sanctuary of Love." He told the audience that "no Catholic family can afford to be a sanctuary, in the sense of digging its own little foxhole. God does not call us to burrow in and wait for the rapture. Our God is a God of life, a God of



abundance, a God of deliverance and a God of joy, and we're his missionaries, by nature and by mandate."

When Christ told his followers to make disciples of all nations, he did not say, "... unless you're married." The Epistle of James tells us that faith without works is a dead faith. It doesn't say "unless you have children."

He called on couples to preach, pray, teach the faith, read Scripture, become models of love, do apostolic works, and "become a beacon for other couples." He cautioned that unless Catholic families "passionately live and joyfully spread their Catholic faith ... they'll have no Catholic faith left to share."

He assured the crowd that "God won't let that happen. We're part of his solution."

Unfortunately, he added, the world is not listening because it speaks a different language than Christianity does.

For example, Christians define love as embodying self-sacrifice. On the other hand, prime-time TV love "almost certainly involves sexual relationships, may or may not involve affection, and only rarely involves self-sacrifice."

The modern world views marriage as an agreement, the archbishop said.

"Marriage not an agreement, but a covenant. Agreements can be passing. A covenant is forever," he said.

He added that most young people are unaware of what a covenant is. Calling for better marriage preparation programs, he said many young Catholics are marrying with good intentions, while not understanding the sacramental nature of marriage.

"Too many of our young people are not ready for the cross. They don't understand its importance in every vocation, including marriage, and so when suffering and sacrifice come, they see these things not as an opportunity to grow in grace, or to witness to the spirit of Christ to others, but as failure. Too many of our young married people simply give up," he said.

Pope says God's fatherhood source of parenthood

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — By promoting authentic values of marriage and family in public opinion and civil legislation, society can cure its ills and the church can achieve greater unity, Pope John Paul II said.

Rediscovering the value of marriage and the family "is ever more urgent," since it is a point of discussion for a large part of modern culture and society, the pope said Dec. 1 during his weekly general audience in the Paul VI Hall.

"It is the conception itself of the family, a community founded on marriage between a man and a woman, which has been targeted in the name of an ethical relativism that is making advances in large sectors of public opinion and civil legislation," the pope said.

The pope told the 7,000 pilgrims gathered that the crisis of the family was leading to a crisis in society.

"Not a few pathological phenomena — from loneliness to violence, to drugs — are also explained by the loss of the nuclear family's identity and function," he said.

"Where the family gives way, society loses its connective fabric, with disastrous consequences to persons, especially the weakest: from children to adolescents, to the disabled, to the sick, to the elderly," the pope said.

The pope said that God's fatherhood, marked by a richness of communion, generation and life, was the source of all human fatherhood and motherhood.

Within the family, the pope said, each person is entrusted with a specific duty.

He highlighted the important role men and women take on in marriage "in their reciprocal spousal relationship and their

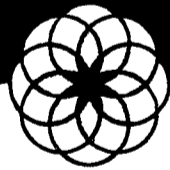
common commitment as parents, in as much as they are called to fulfill their natural characteristics in a deep, enriching and respectful communion."

The pope said the Christian family, as a "domestic church," was called to live in a special way the ideal expressed in Christ's prayer for unity at the Last Supper.

"From the experience of renewed Christian families, the church itself will be able to learn to cultivate, among all the members of the community, a greater family dimension, adopting and promoting a more human and fraternal style of relationships," the pope said.

At the end of the audience, the pope blessed a huge jubilee bell dedicated to peace among peoples. Weighing nearly nine tons and standing eight feet high, the bell was commissioned by parishioners from Limatola, a southern Italian town near Naples.

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