Catholic Church’s social teaching seen as central to budget debate

CNS – The emerging debate on the federal budget – and the distinct options being presented that will chart the country’s future – has brought renewed attention to the Catholic Church’s social teaching.

Prominent in the debate are the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and the common good. Wisconsin Republican Rep. Paul Ryan, a Catholic, has repeatedly cited the principles in recent weeks as justification for the fiscal year 2013 budget plan he drafted, which was approved by the House of Representatives March 29 in a largely party-line vote.

Ryan maintains that his faith and his understanding of church teaching led him to prepare a budget that delineates a decade-long plan to reduce spending on nonmilitary programs as a step toward reducing the country’s $15 trillion deficit. The GOP budget also calls for remaking Medicare, establishing Medicaid as a block grant program for states to administer and simplifying the tax code by closing loopholes and lowering individual and corporate tax rates.

Catholic critics, primarily from academia and community organizations tackling social justice issues, have challenged Ryan on his claims, charging that he is misusing Catholic teaching to support a blatantly political agenda that makes scapegoats of the poor and endangers vulnerable people.

Taking a more measured approach, the chairmen of two U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops committees have voiced their concerns about cuts in several domestic and international programs. Bishop Stephen E. Blaire of Stockton, Calif., chairman of the Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Richard E. Pates of Des Moines, Iowa, chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace, have called for “shared sacrifice” and a “circle of protection” around the poor and vulnerable in budget negotiations.

The debate points to the different conclusions that individuals can reach in attempting to understand how Catholic social teaching can be applied in modern society, said Michael Miller, research fellow and director of media at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty in Grand Rapids, Mich.

“The principles are there. They are to guide us and we are to pay attention to them. You have to affirm those principles. Where Catholics are going to disagree is in the prudential implementation of them,” Miller told Catholic News Service.

The concept of subsidiarity emerged within church teaching in Pope Pius XI’s 1931 encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno” (“In the 40th Year”), marking the 40th anniversary of another social encyclical, Pope Leo XIII’s “Rerum Novarum” (“On the Condition of Workers”).

Explaining the concept, Pope Pius wrote: “Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish on their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do.”
Political Responsibility Guidelines

With the 2012 political season and election campaign heating up, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has prepared guidelines for Catholics, parishes and institutions for faithful citizenship and responsible participation in the political process.

The Church maintains a tax-exempt status by following the U.S. Tax Code as it pertains to church organizations. Failure to do so could jeopardize that status.

The following is a summary of those guidelines gathered from the U.S.C.C.B. webpage.

“Parishes and other IRS-designated section 501(c)(3) church organizations are prohibited from participating in political campaign activity.

“Parishes are often asked by candidates or political groups for permission to speak or distribute literature. Many parishes choose only to distribute Faithful Citizenship materials distributed by their diocese, their state Catholic conference, or the USCCB.

“To avoid violating the political campaign activity prohibition, you should seek the advice of your diocesan attorney or state Catholic conference before giving permission for the distribution of literature or providing the opportunity for candidates to speak.

“The items in this packet, along with other USCCB resources and the advice and materials provided by your diocese and your state Catholic conference, can help you remain non-partisan and maintain consistency with Catholic teaching.”

At right is a suggested bulletin message for Catholic parishes to use during the election season.

DO

- Address the moral and human dimensions of public issues.
- Share church teaching on human life, human rights, and justice and peace.
- Apply Catholic values to legislation and public issues.
- Conduct a non-partisan voter registration drive on church property.
- Distribute unbiased candidate questionnaires covering issues of human life, justice, and peace that have been reviewed and approved by your diocesan attorney.
- Check with your diocesan attorney if you have any questions about what is appropriate.

Source: U.S.C.C.B.

DON’T

- Endorse or oppose candidates for political office.
- Distribute partisan campaign literature under church auspices.
- Arrange for groups to work for a candidate for public office.
- Invite only selected candidates to address your church-sponsored group.
- Conduct voter registration slanted toward one party.
- Distribute a biased candidate survey.

Source: U.S.C.C.B.

We strongly urge all parishioners to register, to become informed on key issues, and to vote. The Church does not support or oppose any candidate, but seeks to focus attention on the moral and human dimensions of issues. We do not authorize the distribution of partisan political materials on parish property.
Run for the Call, a new initiative of the Vocation Office to promote a culture of vocations and raise money to support seminarians in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, will be holding a spaghetti dinner fundraiser from 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday, May 5, at St. Cecilia Church in Oakley. Everyone in the Archdiocese is invited to attend as there are Run for the Call team members from every region of the Archdiocese. Fr. Jamie Weber will have a special blessing for runners at the end of the 4 p.m. Mass at St. Cecilia. The meal, which is sponsored by the Serra Club of Cincinnati, Skyline Chili of Oakley, and LaRosa’s, will feature spaghetti and meatballs, salad, garlic bread, and dessert for a cost of $10 for adults, $5 for kids 6-12. Seminarians and children 5 and under eat free. For more information, go to St. Cecilia’s website, http://www.stceciliacincinnati.org or call Wayne Topp at 513-421-3131 or Stan Messerly at 513-731-2500.
Pipe organ restoration fundraising nears first goal at OSM

In just under a year, almost $100,000 has been raised toward the restoration of the Old St. Mary’s Church historic Austin pipe organ.

Old St. Mary’s is now closer than ever to raising the funds needed to complete step one of the restoration. To celebrate and help OSM reach this goal, all are cordially invited to Old St. Mary’s Day at Hofbräuhaus Newport on Sunday, May 6.

At this event, you can show your support in a variety of ways:
- Fill out an “Organ Donor” card, which you can obtain at HB Newport that day. Sponsors of at least $100 will be recognized on plaques that will hang in the church. This is a great way to show your love of OSM or to memorialize loved ones!
- Purchase split-the-pot or gift basket raffle tickets.
- Finally, and easiest of all, show up for a good time and have something to eat/drink. When ordering, present the attached fundraiser slip to your server, and HB Newport will donate 10% of your bill to Old St. Mary’s Church. Please know that you must bring this slip to the restaurant with you, as OSM is not permitted to distribute these

HHS Mandate information


On that same page, you will find directions on how to get involved, suggested prayers and directions on how to reach out to public officials on this most grievous threat to the First Amendment’s freedom of religious guarantee.

Also on that page are thought-provoking related articles, a complete synopsis of the Church’s teaching on the sanctity of all human life and answers to frequently asked questions about the issue.

Another helpful USCCB webpage is http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/religious-liberty/conscience-protection/resources-on-conscience-protection.cfm

Watch for more information on the “Fortnight for Freedom” called for by the bishops for June 21 through July 4. There will be a special effort during that two-week period to bring the religious freedom issue to the attention of the public through various activities and observances.