

Guidance on Charitable Giving from the Bishops of North Dakota

Ash Wednesday, March 9, 2011

Catholics are compelled by the Gospel to responsibly promote the protection of human life, families, and the common good. We applaud the charitable giving and social justice efforts of our parishes, Catholic schools, and individuals. At the same time, we urge attentiveness to the possibility of endorsing an organization whose mission or affiliation may be morally objectionable or, at least, questionable. We call upon pastors, clergy, and the lay faithful to use guidelines based on the virtue of prudence and justice when making charitable giving decisions.

Church teaching: All human life is sacred and must be protected. This is why we should not support or endorse individuals and organizations that provide, promote, or advocate for abortion, contraception, “reproductive rights/family planning,” or embryonic stem cell research. Marriage, a lifelong partnership between a man and a woman, is the foundation of the family and, therefore, essential to the common good. Accordingly, we should not support individuals and organizations that seek to redefine marriage or whose activities devalue its importance.

Guidelines: When evaluating the appropriateness of participating in, publicizing, or otherwise providing support to a fundraising effort, Catholic entities should consider whether the mission and activities of the organization are consistent with Catholic teaching, particularly as it pertains to human life and marriage. Church facilities should not be used to promote, endorse, or fundraise for such organizations if their policies are contrary to Church teaching.

We take this opportunity to mention certain organizations that Catholic entities should not support.

American Association of University Women: AAUW’s stated mission is to advance “equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research” and often provides local scholarships with money raised through book fairs. AAUW, however, strongly supports abortion rights and same-sex “marriage,” and opposes parental choice in education.

Amnesty International: In 2007, Amnesty International abandoned its neutral stance on abortion and adopted a pro-abortion position.

Crop Walk/Church World Service: CROP Walk, an annual hunger awareness and fundraising effort that benefits many local food pantries, is sponsored by Church World Service (CWS), an agency of the National Council of Churches. Catholic Relief Services withdrew its name from the list of funding recipients since some of the partners of CWS support the provision of contraceptives in their overseas missions and programs and CRS could not guarantee that donations, particularly Catholic donors who have earmarked their contribution to those efforts consistent with Church teaching, would not be utilized for objectionable services.

March of Dimes: The March of Dimes’ focus is the prevention of birth defects, premature birth, and infant mortality. March of Dimes, however, also supports embryonic stem cell research, preimplantation diagnosis for untreatable conditions, and mandatory contraceptive coverage for insurance plans.

Susan G. Komen for the Cure: This anti-breast cancer organization is known for its “Race for the Cure” fundraising activities (not to be confused with “Relay for Life.”) Money raised at these events has gone to Planned Parenthood and the organization refuses to acknowledge the link between abortion and breast cancer.

UNICEF: The Holy See suspended an annual symbolic contribution in 1996 due to the “shift in UNICEF activities” that were once solely focused on child welfare but now includes contraceptive and abortion services.

†Most Rev. Paul A. Zipfel
Bishop of Bismarck

†Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila
Bishop of Fargo