

CHRIST MEDICUS

A LIVING HEALTH CARE MINISTRY SUMMER 2016 NEWSLETTER

So Goes Healthcare, So Goes Our Culture

Did you know?

As the world celebrated the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro this August, many Olympic athletes celebrated something else: their faith. Faith helps many athletes go for the gold.

One of these athletes is Katie Ledecky, who swam for USA in the games and won multiple gold medals. As a Catholic, she said that prayer is a source of strength. "I always pray right before a race," she said in 2012. "The prayer I say is the Hail Mary."



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A message from Mike O'Dea, Founder and Executive Director of the Christ Medicus Foundation (CMF)

"So goes healthcare so goes our culture," the family, and our nation! I recently had a very incredible and exciting, but disappointing experience at the New Hampshire Primary. The reason for me attending this Primary resulted when a friend whom I ran into at the March for Life introduced me to Audrey Mullen, a representative from the Talk Medic News (TMN). When she learned about the mission and accomplishments of the Christ Medicus Foundation and CMF CURO, Audrey explained to me that no one in the media nor the candidates were discussing the loss of conscience and religious liberty in healthcare. She told me that I should consider being there to give witness to this loss of our fundamental right to free exercise of religion in health care that is guaranteed by the First Amendment. She also explained to me that I would have an opportunity to let the candidates and talk show hosts know about the real concrete solutions the Christ Medicus Foundation is providing in order to restore a "culture of life" in healthcare.

This presented a real challenge to me. Once again I found the "Hound of Heaven" working

on me. For the next few days I could not get this out of my mind. I prayed continuously, asking our Blessed Mother to ask her Son to guide me. Christ gave me the answer when I asked my wife Peggy to go to New Hampshire with me. When Peggy said yes, I knew I was supposed to go.

When we arrived at Radio Rowe in the Radisson Hotel in New Hampshire, I was amazed. Here was a room full of more than 50 talk show hosts all engaged in conversations at the same time. Immediately I was given the opportunity to gain exposure for the mission of Christ Medicus and CMF CURO and to evangelize through the radio media. Over the next two days, I spoke on 18 radio shows, each averaging 10-15 minutes.

The following is a brief summary of my message:

First I informed the hosts that the primary reason I wanted to be on their show was to get the presidential candidates to start discussing protection of conscience rights and restoration of our loss of religious liberty in health care resulting from the Affordable Care Act and the HHS Mandates. I reminded them of our First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion, impeding the free exercise of religion.

I gave a brief background of the Christ Medicus Foundation (CMF) since its inception in 1999. I explained that we have been at the forefront of protecting freedom in health care, and that we work closely with the leadership of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), the Catholic Medical Association (CMA), policymakers, and business leaders at the state and federal levels to educate on the need to protect conscience rights and religious liberty in health care.

I was able to discuss the differences between the Democratic candidates who endorse the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Republican candidates who claim they will repeal and replace ACA. On conscience rights and religious liberty in

health care there was almost total silence except some mention of the Little Sisters of the Poor, who recently received a delay from the Supreme Court forcing them to violate their religious freedom. We will make conscience freedom in health care a permanent reality only through our continued work.

No one mentioned specifics on what is being done for conscience rights in Congress. The presidential candidates were not talking about the most important issue – the threatening of our First Amendment rights and religious freedom by the HHS Mandate.

I also discussed the Health Care Conscience Rights Act (HR 940 – 159 co-sponsors) (S.1919 – 23 co-sponsors) and Health Care Savings Accounts for Health Care Sharing Ministries (H.R. 1752 – 112 co-sponsors). In addition to litigating the loss of freedom, we need conscience rights legislation that will return health care to its foundational principles of religious freedom, which is part of human freedom, which is part of human rights and duties, which is why America was founded – to protect our God given rights as stated in the Declaration of Independence.

I also discussed Health Care Sharing Ministries as alternatives to ACA and as exempt from the HHS and Individual Mandates. I specifically mentioned the uniqueness of the ecumenical healthcare sharing ministry CMF CUFO, a Catholic Ministry that partners Samaritan Ministries International (SMI).

Only one talk show by which I was interviewed was aware of the loss of religious freedom in health care, and only a handful were aware of the Health Care Sharing Ministries' exemption from the ACA. No wonder the presidential candidates were not discussing conscience rights and religious liberty in health care!

Did I accomplish my primary reason for being at the New Hampshire Primary? CMF has continued to aggressively push for a vote on conscience legislation. CMF in collaboration with

So Goes Healthcare, So Goes Our Culture (continued)

the USCCB and the CMA were recently able to initiate new federal legislation, the Conscience Protection Act of 2016, HR 4828. We are excited to announce that after 20 years of demanding federal legislation in our public policy initiatives to protect conscience in health care, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passing the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 on July 13 by a vote of 245 to 182. This is a historic event! I believe this was one of the most important votes in our Republic, for it paves the way for restoring religious freedom and conscience rights in health care. Now we must demand a floor vote in the U.S. Senate. It is important for all of us to contact our local U.S. Senators and get them to vote on the Conscience Protection Act of 2016. This way we will clearly know where our elected representatives stand on our most fundamental right. It will also allow us to know where our presidential candidates stand before the November election. I will be doing my part by going to D.C. on August 18 and demand a vote on the floor of the US. Senate.

The measure of our success will be whether or not the presidential candidates talk about conscience legislation and whether the U.S. Senate votes on the Conscience Protection Act of 2016 before Election Day. By the time you read this newsletter, I pray that conscience rights and religious liberty becomes one of, if not the most important issue, debated before the American people.

Although CMF CURO is growing, the Christ Medicus Foundation desperately needs your help to continue restoring a health care culture of life; we need your prayers, personal involvement, and financial assistance. Our ability to lead is limited by the financial resources our supporters contribute. We urgently need your financial assistance. You can donate either on line at www.christmedicus.org or by including a check payable to the Christ Medicus Foundation and mail to P.O. Box 53901, Livonia, MI 48037. I would like to ask you to consider a donation of \$200 or more. I recognize some might not be able to afford anything. For those of you that can afford to do so, please be as generous as possible. Any size donation will help us make a difference.

Don't forget to contact your U.S. Senators and demand a vote on the Conscience Protection Act of 2016. Go to <https://www.humanlifeactioncenter.org/action-alert/urge-support-conscience-protection> to find your U.S. Senator.

Thank you for taking the time to read my article and supporting our mission to restore a health care culture of life, protect our families, and protect our nation.

God bless you all.

Mike O'Dea



On Suffering Well

A Reflection by Michael Vacca

As Christians living in a secular world, it is difficult to maintain a Christian worldview, especially in areas where there is a strong contrast between the world, the flesh, and the devil on one side and the Kingdom of God on the other side. There is, perhaps, no area of our lives where this is more true than the area of suffering. The world, the flesh, and the devil view suffering as an evil to be avoided at all costs. There is no big picture view which encompasses suffering; there is nothing redemptive, salvific, or even dignified in suffering. But the Kingdom of God views suffering as a powerful sign of grace and a channel of grace used by God to facilitate greater intimacy with Him (cf. Matt. 16:24). As Mother Theresa famously remarked, "Pain and suffering have come into your life, but remember pain, sorrow, suffering are but the kiss of Jesus - a sign that you have come so close to Him that He can kiss you."

So much of our faith is acknowledging what is already true: God loves us, we are children of God, we are friends of God, Jesus died for us, we are called to intimacy with each of the persons of the Blessed Trinity, etc. While these things are true, they will not be fully realized until we experience the Beatific Vision, entering fully into the blessed and eternal life of God. So we live in the already but not yet. Our faith consists in embracing the fullness of what we know partially (Cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). In our sufferings, we experience a disconnect between what we know, that we are beloved by God, and the suffering we feel. We sense that the life of God is not a life of suffering, but a life of eternal joy, and yet, we the children of God are suffering. Faced with this contradiction, we can choose to live the reality of

what we know by faith, that we are the beloved children of God (cf. 1 John 3:2), or we can choose to dwell on our suffering and make the avoiding of suffering our solace and end. If we live by faith that God loves us, our suffering brings us closer to God (Cf. John 12:24). If we strive to avoid suffering, our continual suffering may and usually does distance us from God.

So suffering is really a gift from God. If embraced, it brings us closer to God, closer to the joy, peace, and love that our hearts crave. If we reject the gift of suffering, our entire relationship with God and others will be compromised. Our end and God's end will be different; whereas we will be consciously trying to avoid suffering, a necessary aspect to living in this world, God's aim is our purification and holiness through suffering. By rejecting the gift of suffering, we also reject the giver of the Gift, God Himself, and thus our distance from God. We ought to have said, I will not miss this opportunity to draw close to the Fountain of Love and accept suffering as a temporary gift of Eternal Love Himself.

But why would God want us to suffer? Considering that He suffered more than anyone, our suffering is simply a participation in his all-encompassing suffering. The suffering of Jesus was redemptive and life giving; it was the most authentic expression of love (Cf. John 15:13). So when we suffer with Jesus, we are loving with Jesus. So God's will that we suffer temporarily in this life is simply His will that we love as He loves. Love demands that we give all we have to the Lord, and our unwillingness to suffer is, in fact, a lack of love. So when the Lord calls us to suffer, He is calling us to learn how to love perfectly, without counting the cost.

~ Sporty Saints

These three saints will inspire you to stay active this summer

By Emma Vinton



St. Brendan on his Atlantic adventure.



Bl. Pierre Giorgio Frassati on one of his mountain climbs.



Karol Wojtyla (now Pope St. John Paul II) and his kayak.

As the dog days of summer creep along, many are tempted to beat the heat by staying in the air-conditioned indoors. But these warm days are the perfect time to get active outdoors. In fact, even the saints enjoyed sports and the outdoors. Even from the early ages, saints used sports to have fun, enjoy God's creation, and fulfill their own vocations.

St. Brendan the Navigator is a Celtic saint from the 5th to 6th centuries. According to an old Irish tale, St. Brendan undertook a voyage across the Atlantic in a boat which he constructed himself. Though the canoe-like craft – a traditional Irish boat called a curragh – seemed fragile, it carried St. Brendan and his crew on many adventures, possibly even reaching the Americas.

Though it is debated whether the story is fact or fiction, St. Brendan is the patron saint of boatmen, mariners, and sailors. So when enjoying a day by the ocean or boating on a lake, ask for St. Brendan's intercession in navigating your own way to heaven.

Bl. Pierre Giorgio Frassati is another saint who enjoyed the outdoors and spent many hours in physical activity. Though he died in 1925 when he was only 24, Bl. Pierre Giorgio was active physically and spiritually. He enjoyed hiking, mountain climbing, and skiing. One famous photo pictures Bl. Pierre Giorgio climbing a mountain; on the

back of the photo, he himself wrote, "Verso L'Alto," meaning "toward the heights." It was his last climb, however, as he died only one month later. Nevertheless, "toward the heights" remains motivation for the faithful now both in the active and spiritual life.

Before he became pope and took the name John Paul II, Karol Wojtyla used outdoor activities to minister to his parishioners and live out his vocation. Wojtyla was a pastor in Krakow, Poland. He would go on long kayak trips with friends and parishioners during the summers, and he would use his overturned kayak as an altar on which to celebrate mass in the wilderness. It was during one of these kayaking expeditions that he was called back to Warsaw to become a bishop.

When he became Pope John Paul II, he gave many pastoral addresses to athletes and sports teams. In one of these addresses, he proclaimed that the "sporting effort is a real school of true human virtue...In sport, in fact, virtue is victorious; and so everyone is victorious."

So whether boating, rock climbing, kayaking, or any other of the many sports that the summer days permit, let us, like these three sporty saints, always use physical activities to grow in virtue, glorify God, become saints ourselves, and be victorious.

Please Support the Christ Medicus Foundation

Since the Christ Medicus Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, our work protecting Catholic health care in public policy and facilitating the development of faithful Catholic Medical Centers is dependent on the prayers and financial contributions of the individuals who receive this newsletter. Please be as generous as possible. God has blessed us all differently in what we can afford to give. Whether it be a gift of \$10, \$100, or \$1,000, it will go a long way to help in providing solutions to protect religious liberty and freedom to choose Christ-centered health care.

Through the grace of God and His Holy Spirit, CMF has accomplished great things. I am so thankful for all of you that have supported our ministry over the past 17 years and for all of you that will continue to be supportive of CMF's witness to the New Evangelization in Catholic Health Care. The growth of our ministry is directly dependent on the generosity of our supporters. Please make your donation today and return to Christ Medicus Foundation, P.O. Box 530901, Livonia, MI 48153 or donate online at www.christmedicus.org.

Prayer Intentions

As a community, we encourage you to pray one memorare daily for the following intentions:

- the spiritual and physical needs of the Members of the ministry and those who serve the ministry,
- the healing, conversion, and flourishing of the world through the Holy Spirit,
- the conversion of fallen away family members, coworkers, friends, and acquaintances this coming Christmas,
- an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our American culture, particularly in health care,
- the protection of the unborn,
- the protection of the spiritually, physically, and materially impoverished,
- the protection of persecuted Christians, all religious minorities, and religious liberty,
- the Church and her obedience to the Holy Spirit, and
- Pope Francis' intentions.

Let us pray:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen.





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