



# GOVERNMENT AS A FORCE FOR GOOD

*The Honorable Dale E. Kildee*

Volume Four

ACTION ON BEHALF OF JUSTICE

Michigan Catholic Conference  
Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Monograph Series

---

ACTION ON BEHALF OF JUSTICE  
MICHIGAN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY MONOGRAPH SERIES

Volume One: A VISION REVISITED  
His Eminence, John Cardinal Dearden, D.D.  
Francis J. Coomes  
Monica Kostielney, R.S.M.

Volume Two: EDUCATION FOR TRANSFORMATION  
Irene Waldmann, S.S.J., Ph.D.

Volume Three: AN APPROACH TO AN ETHIC OF TECHNOLOGY  
Reverend Walter A. Markowicz, Ph.D., S.T.L.

Volume Four: GOVERNMENT AS A FORCE FOR GOOD  
The Honorable Dale E. Kildee

Action on Behalf of Justice, volume four: Government as a Force for Good

Michigan Catholic Conference Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Monograph Series

Copyright © 1988 by the Michigan Catholic Conference.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Designed by Hudson Creative Group, Lansing, Michigan.

Published by

the Michigan Catholic Conference,  
505 North Capitol Avenue, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

Printed and bound in the United States of America.

---

# FOREWORD

---

---

The year 1988 marks the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Michigan Catholic Conference. I am pleased to commend this monograph series which the Board of Directors has commissioned as part of its anniversary observance.

In six monographs, distinguished authorities and practitioners of Catholic action on behalf of justice address the major areas of the work of the Conference. This theme embraces a range of issues which have acquired special significance for the Church in Michigan since the Holy Father's pastoral visit to our state in September 1987.

At Hart Plaza, in Detroit, Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, spoke very forcefully about the reason for the Church's presence in society. He reminded us that "social progress and human development are . . . of particular concern to the Church" and consequently Catholics "must be instrumental in promoting a social order that respects the dignity of the human person and serves the common good."

An anniversary is an occasion to remember the past and express gratitude. More important, it provides us with an opportunity to look forward. In little more than a decade, we will be entering the third millennium of Christianity. As we prepare for that great event, it is in every way appropriate for us to be conscious of the proper relationship between the church and the world. Like the Michigan Catholic Conference itself, this monograph series offers a balanced and dynamic vision of the Church's commitment to promote the development of society.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Michigan Catholic Conference, I wish to thank the monograph authors for helping us celebrate twenty-five years of service to the people of Michigan by recalling our beginnings and leading us onward to meet the new challenges which lie ahead in the struggle to preserve and defend human dignity.

Edmund Cardinal Szoka, D.D., J.C.L.  
*Archbishop of Detroit*  
*Chairman, Board of Directors*  
*Michigan Catholic Conference*

*Editorial Review Panel:* Most Reverend Kenneth J. Povish, D.D., Chairman; Sister Claudia Carlen, I.H.M.; Genevieve Casey, M.L.S.; Reverend John Zenz, S.T.D. *Editorial Director:* Sister Monica Kostielney, R.S.M.; *Editor:* Michael A. Smith, M.A.; *Editorial Assistant:* Sister Arlene Mary Williams, R.S.M.

---

# PREFACE

---

Congressman Dale E. Kildee, in volume four of the monograph series, comments on the legislative process in promoting a just social order. Having served with the Congressman in the Michigan legislature, I am not surprised that he speaks of "promoting, defending, protecting and enhancing human dignity." Nor am I surprised that "charity," "mercy," and "compassion" permeate his monograph. The human dignity which he so highly reveres must be the common denominator of a pluralistic society. Without that common denominator, no society can properly function.

Congressman Kildee's belief in the importance of each person is religiously based: each person has God as Creator and, in the person of Jesus, as Brother. Though he would not insist that all agree with his view, he would insist that all recognize the fact and importance of the human dignity of every person.

The national goals of "establishing justice" and "securing liberty," as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, are decreed by the fact of human dignity—the fundamental importance of each individual.

While Congressman Kildee confines this monograph to "justice" (along with mercy, charity and compassion), he has always practiced the tougher, more demanding requisite of honoring human dignity by combining justice with liberty, while maintaining the essential balance of the two.

Congressman Kildee and the Michigan Catholic Conference have both shown by their actions that they share the same definition of justice—that full human justice is present only when all persons have obtained an adequacy, via both the public and private sectors, of the twelve cooperative human necessities; namely, food, clothing, shelter, health care, safety, education, life, mobility, ownership, communication, aesthetics, and diverse personal interests. These are called cooperative necessities advisedly, for they are not obtainable for anyone except by the cooperation of all persons. Certainly, the Congressman and the Conference have contributed more than their share to that cooperation in the arena of public policy.

At its inception twenty-five years ago the Michigan Catholic Conference was charged with the demanding and

complex task of interacting with government and society to promote public policies which protect and enhance the human dignity of all the people of Michigan. The Michigan Catholic Conference's statewide activities have contributed also to a nationwide consciousness of the dignity of every human person. The enhanced national commitment to social and economic justice is evident from the congressional legislation which Congressman Kildee discusses in this monograph.

The Honorable William A. Ryan  
Speaker Emeritus  
Michigan House of Representatives  
1958-1982

---

# PROLOGUE

---

In the American system of government, at the national and state levels, the lawmaking body is the legislative assembly of the democratically elected representatives of the people. The legislature is charged with the task of making laws which enhance the dignity and wellbeing of all persons. The preeminence of the Constitution, and hence of its interpretation by the Supreme Court, over the acts of the legislature ensures that the nation or state conducts its affairs according to law, rather than at the whim of fleeting majorities. Good legislation is the expression, not of the majority's arbitrary will, but of its considered understanding of how the principles of the rule of law should be applied to a given set of circumstances.

Legislation on the national level is frequently general in nature, declaring the broad will of the people, as, for example, the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>1</sup>, which required that discrimination on the basis of race be discontinued, but left the details of each situation to the appropriate local officials. On the state level, it is frequently possible for the legislature to be more specific. Michigan's Fair School Bus Law of 1963<sup>2</sup> permitted children attending nonpublic schools to use public school transportation. The Elliot Larson Civil Rights Act of 1976<sup>3</sup> defined civil rights and prohibited discriminatory practices, policies and customs in religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, height, weight, or marital status.

The Second Vatican Council explains the necessity and purpose of political action in this way:

Individuals, families, and the various groups which make up the civil community, are aware of their inability to achieve a truly human life by their own unaided efforts; they see the need for a wider community where each one will make a specific contribution to an even broader implementation of the common good. For this reason they set up various forms of political communities. The political community, then, exists for the common good: this is its full justification and meaning and the source of its specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment. . . . It is clear that the political community and pub-

lic authority are based on human nature, and therefore that they need belong to an order established by God. . . . It follows that political authority, either within the political community as such or through organizations representing the state, must be exercised within the limits of the moral order and directed toward the common good.<sup>4</sup>

This orientation of political action toward the common good led Pope Paul VI to describe legislators as persons "invested with noble responsibilities," chief among them being the guaranteeing of personal rights and duties. Quoting his predecessor, Pope John XXIII, Pope Paul taught that "the chief concern of civil authorities must . . . be to ensure that these rights are recognized, respected, coordinated, defended and promoted, and that each individual is enabled to perform his duties more easily."<sup>5</sup> The Catholic legislator has many opportunities to promote the constant teachings of the Church on distributive justice so insistently re-affirmed by the Second Vatican Council:

God destined the earth and all it contains for all men and women, and all peoples, so that all created things would be shared fairly by all humanity under the guidance of justice tempered by charity. . . . Faced with a world today where so many people are suffering from want, the Council asks individuals and governments to remember the saying of the Fathers: "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you do not feed him you are killing him."<sup>6</sup>

Board of Directors  
*Michigan Catholic Conference*

---

# GOVERNMENT AS A FORCE FOR GOOD

---

*The role of government is to promote, defend,  
protect and enhance human dignity.*

As Catholics, our faith needfully admonishes us and, more hearteningly, inspires us to do good works—to meet the needs of living, breathing human beings with comfort as real as their suffering: food for children whose bodies and minds will be stunted by a diet devoid of fresh fruit or vegetables, shelter for the families whose homes are the streets and beds are the grates, and better health care for senior citizens who must choose between a trip to the doctor and a trip to the grocery store.

Saint James wrote with elegant simplicity about the tangibles of real faith:

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith, but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also, faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.<sup>7</sup>

I am often struck by how much of Jesus' short life was spent feeding the hungry and healing the sick. Our Savior's swift compassion for God's suffering children was not an abstract concept to remain hidden in his heart. Not when his children were in pain. His love for them had immediate and powerful results. The lame did walk, the blind did see, the hungry were fed.

I have been a Catholic for fifty-eight years—all my life. I have been a lawmaker for twenty-four years. In that joint role, I have had the opportunity to mesh our faith's call to action with national policy that does indeed seek to relieve human suffering. I have always believed that the role of government is to promote, defend, protect, and enhance

human dignity, and I see that to be in natural accord with the teachings of our faith.

***Our Father's call to both justice and mercy can be brought with confidence into the political arena.***

We as Christians are uniquely equipped to understand the basis of that human dignity. We believe that we are created by God in His own image and likeness. What dignity! We also believe that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity became human, became our brother and died on the cross for our sins. Carrying this insight about human dignity into government is of tremendous benefit to everyone and a threat to no one.

Our own individual acts of kindness are of priceless comfort and service to other people. No one who ever soothed a weeping child or spent an afternoon with a lonely grandparent doubts the value of those deeds. Our involvement in government, in support of programs that will better the lives of millions of our fellow human beings here and around the world, is another arena in which we can do tangible good.

Many Christians in public and private life see no way to connect their faith to government policy. They see these two arenas as distinct and separate, with no bridge between them. Perhaps some of us even view attempts to bring them together as inappropriate, or out of keeping with our faith's teachings.

I do not pretend to have calculated a perfect, comprehensive formula for how each one of us is to take our faith to national policy issues. Each one of us must find our own way to hold this convergence of morality and policy, our own way to mesh faith and political action. We cannot always be absolutely certain that there is only one right way to do that. I do not believe that perfect surety is always attainable. What I do most passionately believe is that our Father's call to both justice and mercy can be brought with confidence into the political arena.

***We find in Scripture broad themes that run like a tapestry's rich thread through the bible and form the underpinnings of our faith.***

As the representative of the seventh congressional district in Michigan, I must legislate for each of the five hundred thousand people in my district. Some of my votes will affect not only every person in my district, but every person in this country—Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Muslim, Hindu and atheist. Is it my role, or that of the government, to impose upon non-Christians a Christian code of morality or to make illegal that which is sinful? Clearly, I believe the answer is no. Our church holds many things to be sinful—lying, fornication, coveting. These acts are morally reprehensible, but they are more properly a matter for spiritual growth than criminal prosecution.

So, clearly, there are instances where our faith does not overlap with policy. How can we find the ways, if there are any, by which we can constructively bring our faith into the wide scope of national policy, where a good deed has the potential to do good not just for one person, but for millions? The complexities of this issue do not free us from responding to it. This matter is far from simple, yes, but not so murky that we must be paralyzed into inaction. I believe we can find enough insights and achieve enough clarity to indeed act.

Bible verses are quoted, or misquoted, for virtually any cause or purpose. They are subject to misinterpretation and manipulation. But in addition to individual verses, we also find in Scripture broader themes that run like a tapestry's rich thread through the bible and form the underpinnings of our faith. A central and undisputed theme such as loving our fellow human beings is a concept we can more easily grasp, is much less likely to lead us into faulty or inappropriate action, and is also in harmony with the role of government.

*We bring the riches of our faith to government  
to serve other people, not condemn them.  
We bring them as an offering,  
not an ultimatum; a balm, not a weapon.*

Here, then, in the central themes of our faith, we begin to find some guidance for our actions in the political arena. The themes of charity and compassion, found over and over again in Scripture, give us a unique perspective to bring to our government. Clearly, this is a very different matter from imposing our faith on others through the political process. We bring the riches of our faith to government to serve

other people, not condemn them. We bring them as an offering, not an ultimatum; a balm, not a weapon.

Saint Matthew measured righteous actions in the blunt, bottom-line terms of human suffering:

Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the King will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."<sup>8</sup>

I will take my cue from the Gospel of Saint Matthew and talk about tangible help for the needy. The King in Matthew 25 said: "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink." We do not have to work hard to put ourselves in his place. We, too, are surrounded by hungry people—children who never taste meat or milk, pregnant mothers whose meager diets will damage, perhaps irrevocably, their unborn children, seniors who steal shamefully into the corner market to buy dog food for dinner. If they don't live in our neighborhood, they do live in our town. If we don't see them in the course of our everyday routine, we do see them on our television sets. They live in every city in this country; they live in our city.

Congress recently passed a bill to help put food on the tables of the hungry poor. The Emergency Hunger Relief Act of 1988<sup>9</sup> will give poor Americans badly needed assistance in the form of milk, cheese, and other food staples. Under this law, up to \$274 million in these food items will be made available to hungry people across the country—a program that meets real need with real help.

The Gospel of Saint Matthew also declares, in praising the righteous, "(I was) a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me." On August 3, the House passed a bill that will help homeless Americans find shelter and get back on their feet. We have all seen homeless people. Dirty, ragged, suffering from mental or physical illnesses, they

roam the streets of Michigan and the nation. The shambling homeless who stop us on the street for a dollar do not tug at our hearts the way a needy child might. They are not clean or attractive to look at. They may not even respond to our kindness with gratitude. They are not a neat, tidy problem with the simple, gratifying solution that has become so appealing in this instant society. But they are His children, and beneath the dirt, and the tatters, and the illness are suffering human beings. And they have no shelter.

*Government action does make a difference.  
It is as real as a meal on the table, the smile on a  
preschooler's face or the clasp of a hand.*

The McKinney Homeless Assistance Reauthorization bill,<sup>10</sup> passed in the U.S. House of Representatives, would authorize \$642.5 million for fiscal 1989 for emergency shelter grants and housing aid. It does not stop there, but goes further, to give our homeless the kind of help they need if they are to be restored to society—outpatient health and mental health services, education programs, and community services.

"(I was) ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me," the passage from Saint Matthew continues. Many of America's elderly are physically weak and ailing, unable to take care of themselves without help. They are literally prisoners in their own homes, often without family or friends. So, without help, what kind of life do they face? What if they, on most days of the week, cannot easily lift themselves from their beds, cannot prepare a meal, cannot safely manage the tub or shower, cannot dispose of their garbage or shop for groceries? Are they consigned, then, to lie helpless in unwashed bedding, making infrequent, painful trips to a bare kitchen, unable to eat or wash, trapped in filth and degradation?

Too many are. One person living that way is too many. But the reasons why tens of thousands of elderly Americans have escaped that tragedy is that their government stepped in to help. A provision I added to the Older Americans Act<sup>11</sup>, which became law last year, establishes the first ever program to provide frail, elderly Americans with volunteers, homemakers and health aides to help them with everyday activities they cannot perform alone, such as bathing, eating, cleaning, and shopping.

There are many, many more bills pending in Congress and state legislatures that would touch and better the lives of God's most vulnerable children. There are many laws that already have been passed that do just that. They make it possible for an ill senior citizen to fill a prescription and a poor mother to deliver a healthy baby. Government action does make a difference. It is as real as a meal on the table, the smile on a preschooler's face or the clasp of a hand.

Christ said the poor will always be among us. We should accept this as a challenge, not an excuse. We, individually, may not be able to feed every hungry mouth or soothe every troubled spirit. We cannot remove pain from this world. But our help and comfort, whether we offer it to one person or to the entire country, make a tangible difference in people's lives. As Catholics, we have much to offer our country and our world. Surely when we make it possible for one child, or one million children, to eat a hot lunch every day at school, we indeed do the will of our Lord. Surely we know, with awe and gratitude, that the God who cares deeply and personally enough about us to number every hair on our heads cares, too, whether our stomachs are empty or our bodies are unclothed.

I commend the Michigan Catholic Conference for twenty-five years of leadership and needed, practical service, and I commend the many, many Catholics in Michigan who lighten the loads of those who walk beside them and light the way for those who struggle behind them. I am honored to stand with you.

## NOTES

1. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-352, 78 Stat.241 (1964).
2. 1963 Mich. Pub. Acts 241 (Current Version Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. 380.1321 (West 1987).
3. 1976 Mich. Pub. Acts 453, Mich. Comp. Laws Ann. 37.2101 (West 1987).
4. Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, 7 December 1965, n. 74.
5. Paul VI, *The Parliamentary System in Crisis*, Address to Members of the Interparliamentary Union, Rome, Italy, 23 September 1972. *The Pope Speaks*, v. 17, 3 (1972), 193.
6. Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et spes)*, 7 December 1965, n. 69.
7. James 2:14-17 (*New American Bible*, revised New Testament, 1986).
8. Matthew 25:34-40 (idem).
9. The Emergency Hunger Relief Act of 1988, Pub. L. No. 100-435, \_\_\_\_\_ Stat. \_\_\_\_\_ (1988).
10. The McKinney Homeless Assistance Reauthorization Bill, H.R. 4351, 100th Congress, 2nd Session, (1988).
11. Older Americans Act, Pub. L. No. 100-175, 101 Stat.926 (1987).

---

## Michigan Catholic Conference

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS NOVEMBER 1988

---

---

### His Eminence

Edmund Cardinal Szoka, D.D., J.C.L.,  
*Chairman*

Archdiocese of Detroit

Most Reverend Kenneth J. Povish, D.D.,  
*President*

*Diocese of Lansing*

Most Reverend Robert J. Rose, D.D.,  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

*Diocese of Gaylord*

Most Reverend Joseph M. Breitenbeck, D.D.,  
*Diocese of Grand Rapids*

Most Reverend Paul V. Donovan, D.D.,  
*Diocese of Kalamazoo*

Most Reverend Mark F. Schmitt, D.D.,  
*Diocese of Marquette*

Most Reverend Kenneth E. Untener, D.D.,  
*Diocese of Saginaw*

Sr. M. Eugene Doucher, S.S.J.  
*Nazareth, Michigan*

Dr. Jesse F. Goodwin  
*Detroit, Michigan*

Mr. Julian F. Joseph  
*Allen Park, Michigan*

Reverend James A. Murray  
*Lansing, Michigan*

Mrs. Frances L. Ryan  
*Lansing, Michigan*

Mr. Gerald George Vairo  
*Laurium, Michigan*

Mrs. Rosemary Wilson  
*Midland, Michigan*

### AUXILIARY BISHOPS

Most Reverend Moses Anderson, S.S.E., D.D.

Most Reverend Patrick R. Cooney, D.D.

Most Reverend Thomas J. Gumbleton, D.D.

Most Reverend Joseph C. McKinney, D.D.

Most Reverend Dale J. Melczek, D.D.

Most Reverend Walter J. Schoenherr, D.D.

### LIAISON OFFICERS

Reverend Louis C. Cappo

Reverend Walter A. Hurley

Sister Patrice Konwinski, O.P.

Reverend Robert C. Morlino

Reverend John A. Najdowski

Mr. Thomas P. Schroeder

Reverend James A. Suchocki

---

*Dale E. Kildee*, United States Congressman for the seventh district, democrat from Flint, Michigan, was born on September 16, 1929, in Flint. Congressman Kildee received his B.A. degree from Sacred Heart Seminary, Detroit, and his Teacher's Certificate from the University of Detroit. After graduating from the University of Michigan with the M.A. degree, he pursued graduate studies at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan, under a Rotary Foundation Fellowship. He was a teacher at the University of Detroit High School from 1954 to 1956 and at Flint Central High School from 1956 to 1964. In that year he was elected to the Michigan House of Representatives from the eighty-first district. He was subsequently re-elected to four succeeding terms. In 1974 he was elected to the Michigan State Senate from the twenty-ninth district. In 1976 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives. He has been returned to the House by the electorate of the seventh district in every subsequent congressional election. In 1979 Congressman Kildee was elected by his colleagues to the Executive Committee of the Energy and Environmental Study Conference and to the House Fair Employment Practices Committee. In the same year he was also appointed Chair of the Education and Labor Committee's Indian Education Task Force. From 1983 to 1986 he served as Democratic Zone Whip and in 1987 he was appointed Democratic Whip-at-Large. In 1985 Congressman Kildee was appointed a member of the House of Representatives Page Board, becoming Chair in 1987. He is currently a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor and Chair of its Subcommittee on Human Resources. He is also a Senior Member of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. He is a member of the Optimists, the Urban League, the Knights of Columbus, Phi Delta Kappa, and the American Federation of Teachers. In 1965 Dale Kildee married the former Gayle Heyn. They have three children: David, Laura and Paul.

