

## Legislative (Spirituality Commission Subcommittee)

**Coreen Marklein, MDCCW Legislative Chair**

May 2015

MDCCW President Rosa Ropers and I attended Catholics at the Capitol the day after the April election. We helped with morning registration and attended a day full of sessions with excellent speakers. Held every two years to coincide with the biennial budget session, the event brings together individuals of varied backgrounds to learn about what is happening in the Wisconsin State Legislature and what we can do to interweave our Catholic social teachings in everyday life. The day featured a variety of workshops, ranging from immigration policy and the family to reforming Wisconsin's criminal justice system.

Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald and Assembly

Minority Leader Peter Barca, both Catholics, gave opening remarks. They spoke about the biennial budget process and its timeline. Among the issues they noted were pro-life, increasing the speed limit, right to work and the Wisconsin Supreme Court. They shared information on subsidies between the states and federal government, long-term care, Family Care, disability issues, SeniorCare and affordable prescriptions, and stewardship programs such as BadgerCare and Medicare. Primary health care is a key issue.

The morning began with a prayer service led by the Most Reverend Robert C. Morlino, Bishop of Madison. Jean Kelly, our Milwaukee Province director for NCCW, gave the first reading. CCW members also attending were Gayle Johnson and Lucille Brandner from the Diocese of Superior. After the prayer service, attendees went to one of many breakout sessions.

Keynote speaker was Dr. Jonathan J. Reyes, executive director of the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. He spoke on "Combatting Poverty through a Culture of Encounter." He noted that we are a culture of exclusion, becoming two separate Americas. The gap between the upper and lower classes has widened. We are a culture of encounter. We need to take the time to connect with one another.

Attendees selected from morning and afternoon breakout sessions focusing on Catholic faith and teaching. A panel discussion was held in the afternoon "Giving Voice to the Cry of the Poor." The bishops of Wisconsin are forming a task force to help them develop a statewide Catholic response to poverty. Panelists shared their perspectives as to what Catholics should ask of society and of each other in addressing poverty. Most Reverend Jerome E. Lisecki, Archbishop of Milwaukee, closed the day with remarks and prayers. Participants went to the Capitol afterwards to visit with their legislatures.

[Wisconsin Catholic Conference:](http://www.wisconsincatholic.org)

<http://www.wisconsincatholic.org>

[Budget Issues & Catholic Perspective:](http://www.wisconsincatholic.org/State_Budget_.pdf)

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