

in a
WordTM

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**Mississippi Bishops speak to
the USA government
for the poor both at home
and internationally**

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD



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May 26, 2017

This week, President Trump unveiled his FY18 federal budget proposal, a document that seeks to balance our nation's budget but that is also a reflection of our American values. Or is it?

The budget includes steep cuts to both domestic and international funding for programs that help the poor, while increasing military spending. Many have spoken out in opposition to cuts of vital programs like Meals on Wheels or the Food Stamp program so many of our brothers and sisters rely on. And their voices have been amplified by media coverage of a budget that very much seems to be balanced on the backs of some of our fellow Americans who can least afford it.

For years, federal funding has been a revenue stream that supports essential health and social needs throughout Mississippi. Drastic cuts are certain to be harmful to all segments of the population, especially to vulnerable children and the elderly. Of course, it is incumbent upon our elected federal officials to direct the nation's resources toward promoting the general welfare and national defense. On moral and civic grounds, we believe that a healthy and educated populace is of paramount importance for the security of our nation.

But we must also speak out about the draconian cuts to foreign aid funding the proposed budget includes. As Catholics, we're called by the gospel to help our neighbors – whether they're down the street or across the globe – and pay attention to 'the least of these.' Millions of people around the world depend on our generosity for their next meal, their clean drinking water, or the roof over their heads. But their voices aren't heard. We must be their voice.

With nearly 65 million forcibly displaced people in the world right now – more than 20 million of them refugees - and famine-like conditions in four countries, the proposed elimination of U.S. food aid especially would create a massive gap in assistance, resulting in lives lost.

In Mali, for example, the American Catholic's international aid organization, Catholic Relief Services, provides US-government funded school lunches to hundreds of thousands of children. It's often their only reliable meal, and without it many would drop out of school.

Across East Africa, in Somalia, Ethiopia and South Sudan, where famine was recently declared, food aid is a lifeline for millions who would otherwise be on the verge of starvation due to recurring drought and climate change.

Foreign aid provides much more than food. In Central America, for example, CRS and our local church partners provide job and skills training to youth whose lives are threatened daily by gang violence. Providing them with better economic prospects combats the proliferation of gangs and enables them to stay in their communities instead of migrating.

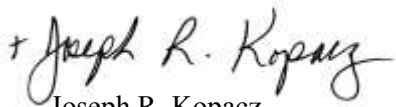
Americans are proud of international assistance that saves lives and gives people a chance at a future. We imagine ourselves in the shoes of a Somali woman who cannot feed her children, and she compels us to act. We feel God inviting us to be the Good Samaritan.

We have to be good stewards of our resources and balancing the budget requires difficult decisions. Those decisions should be “guided by moral criteria that protect human life and dignity, give central importance to “the least of these” (Matthew 25), and promote the welfare of workers and families who struggle to live in dignity,” as some of my brother bishops recently stated in a letter to Congress.

As the world’s wealthiest nation, the United States plays a key role in protecting the common good globally. The elimination of programs that offer food to starving families and development assistance to those seeking opportunity would have a detrimental impact on millions of lives around the world.

The Lord hears the cry of the poor. We urge our government to listen as well, even amidst the many competing challenges we face around the world.

Yours in Christ,



Joseph R. Kopacz
Bishop of Jackson

Sincerely yours in Christ



Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi



“As the world’s wealthiest nation, the United States plays a key role in protecting the common good globally. The elimination of programs that offer food to starving families and development assistance to those seeking opportunity would have a detrimental impact on millions of lives around the world. The Lord hears the cry of the poor. We urge our government to listen as well, even amidst the many competing challenges we face around the world.”

in a word or two



The National Black Catholic Congress CONGRESS XII

JULY 6-9, 2017 IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Retreats:

Men of Prayer and Mercy
PRIESTS' RETREAT

The Genius of Men
MEN'S RETREAT

The Genius of Women
WOMEN'S RETREAT

Proposed Speakers and Topics:

The Challenges Facing the Black Family
by Dr. Trish Bent-Goodley

The Eucharistic Lamb of God is True 'Soul Food' Indeed
by Fr. Giles Conwill

The Angelic Warfare Confraternity
by Dominicans of the Eastern Province

Be Fruitful and Multiply: Increasing the Music Ministry

And **Read On for King Jesus - The Basics of Sight-Singing**
by Tonya Dorsey

Leadership
And **The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me**
by Fr. Maurice Emelu

Praying with the Church
by Franciscan Friars of Renewal

Personal Testimony of Healing from Addiction
by Dr. Bernard Franklin

The Biblical Basis for Social Justice
by Friar Douglas McMillan

We Have Been Called: Wisdom from Black Catholic History
by Paula Manchester

Shout for Justice, Shout for Joy
And **The Family Fully Alive**
by Damon Owens

Events:

Health Fair • Hope for Haiti Project
• **Exhibits/Vendors**

Proposed Youth Track Speakers and Topics:

Clarity and Charity
by Michael Horne

Beauty
by Fr. Sean Kilcawley

Joy
by Damon Owens

Let Africa Be African
by Obianuju Ekeocha

And many more!



Keynote & Workshops from these presenters:

Peter Kodwo Cardinal Turkson
President, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

Bishop Joseph N. Perry
Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago



Dr. Tricia



Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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