



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2010
Contact: Andrea Schellman
703-224-0990, ext., 104
aschellman@nccw.org

**NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CATHOLIC WOMEN
HOSTS HISTORIC 90th ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION**

Arlington, VA –More than 600 members and friends of the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) met November 10-13, at the Renaissance Washington Hotel, to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of NCCW. Convention participants renewed their commitment to spirituality, leadership, and service and explored practical ways to bring their faith to bear on problems at home and around the world.

During the opening liturgy of the convention, Msgr. Robert Servatius, Chairman of NCCW Moderators, ended his homily saying, “God has given us gifts to be the living gospel in the world today which prompts me to offer a challenge. What is the gospel according to you? Put your name in the place of Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.”

The opening general session of the convention featured a panel discussion by some of the nation’s key Catholic lay leaders who addressed ways to transform social justice principles into action. Moderated by Tony Spence, Director and Editor-in-Chief of Catholic News Service, the panel offered ideas on the most pressing national and international priorities for Catholic leadership. Helen Alvaré, Associate Professor of Law at George Mason University, noted that with regard to abortion, “public opinion has trended in our favor, but the opportunity for permanent remedy is limited...” She also noted the destabilizing trend that more and more children are born outside of marriage, placing them at higher risk of poverty. Even though there are programs with the admirable goal of “trying to connect fathers to children,” they often do so “without connecting them [fathers] to the mothers.”

“What does it mean to bring good news to the poor?” asked panelist John Carr, Executive Director of the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. “What does it mean to set the captive free when 10 percent of our population has nowhere to go, where one million children never see the day of their birth?” Carr noted his relief at the end of the election cycle “when we heard about the poor, but we heard about them as weapons” used by one party against another. “We need to change the wind,” he urged, “because politicians change with the wind.”

Ambassador Thomas Melady, U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, 1989-1993, recounted the history of U.S.-Vatican relations, noting that in 1840, anti-Catholic sentiment resulted in legislation that for 90 years forbade spending “one penny on any contact with the Holy See.” Today, said Melady, “the U.S. and the Holy See have a lot in common, particularly their common concern about the unholy trinity of poverty, illiteracy, and disease.”

The convention featured workshops on topics of importance to Catholic women and the organizations they serve, as they carry out the NCCW “Campaign for Human Dignity” initiative: immigration, human trafficking,

empowering the homeless, understanding Gen X and Gen Y, spirituality, prayer, Theology of the Body, addressing the challenge of pornography, climate change and poverty, hunger and poverty, and including disabled people in parish life.

At the NCCW Annual Business meeting, Judy Powers, from the Diocese of Palm Beach, was installed as President-Elect. The following members were installed as new NCCW province directors: Patricia Langston, Province of Atlanta; Barbara Belldina, Province of Baltimore; Joan Weber, Province of Chicago; Mona Barrett, Province of Cincinnati; Marcella Redmond, Province of Denver; Concettina Gillies, Province of Hartford; Anne Wharton, Province of Louisville; Teresa Boscia, Province of Newark; Katherine Broz, Province of Omaha; Teresa Sarzynski, Province of San Antonio; Jacqueline Brandon, Province of San Francisco; Sue Bregel, Province of Seattle; and Olga Baeza, Province of Washington, DC.

At the closing Eucharist of the convention at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick noted that women and families are the lynchpins of society and used as an example, Christians in the Middle East, where years of war are taking a terrible toll. Many are awakened by thugs in the middle of the night and ordered to renounce their faith or leave immediately. "I hope I would have the courage that they have had," he said. "I hope I would leave rather than renounce my faith." He also talked about traveling in the Middle East and seeing the power of love, the power of a hug, to help people brutalized by war begin to heal. Finally, he commended the work of the members of the National Council of Catholic Women, urging them to put their love and action to the service of others.

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