



Emilie's lessons live on

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# The Catholic Spirit



Vocations club takes a Roman holiday

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News with a Catholic heart

TheCatholicSpirit.com

## Tightening the belt

*With state legislators focused on a huge budget deficit, Catholic groups hope poor aren't squeezed too tightly*

By Maria Wiering  
The Catholic Spirit

In a budget year when Minnesota lawmakers typically dole out dollars to fund programs, they will be looking instead for places to cut, or cut back.



With the start of the 2009 legislative session Jan. 6, lawmakers must address a projected state budget shortfall of \$5.7 billion over the next two-and-a-half years.

That reality means two Catholic public policy organizations will be playing a lot of defense in coming months, working to ensure that funding isn't cut for programs that help low-income people, despite the poor economy and state budget deficit.

Some experts expect the budget shortfall to increase to \$7 billion — or 15 to 20 percent of the budget — when the next financial forecast is released in February. The deficit is largely a result of the economic recession.

"Just a few months ago, we were afraid that it was going to be a \$4 billion deficit," said Patrick Ness, public policy manager for Catholic Charities' Office for Social Justice. "Now we're saying, 'Brace for \$7 billion.'"

Every odd-numbered year, the Minnesota State Legislature creates a two-year budget, which means this year legislators will draw up a spending plan through June 2011. The state's fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30.

Thus far, Gov. Tim Pawlenty has cut \$271.4 million from a deficit acquired during the current fiscal year. He also plans to use the remaining \$155 million from the state's reserves to address the problem. Minnesota law requires the state to have a balanced budget.

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## Dominican sisters to leave Our Lady of Good Counsel Home

*Franciscan Health Community to assume operation of St. Paul cancer home pending Vatican approval*

By Julie Carroll  
The Catholic Spirit

After 67 years of providing free care for terminal cancer patients at Our Lady of Good Counsel Home in St. Paul, the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne are turning over leadership of the cancer home, according to a Jan. 6 press release.

Franciscan Health Community in St. Paul will assume operation of Our Lady of Good Counsel Home, pending approval by the Vatican, the release said.

**"Their love for their patients, just to help them pass to eternal life, was always so beautiful to me."**

JOAN DECKER

Our Lady of Good Counsel volunteer

Franciscan Health Community provides senior housing and services, including skilled nursing care, home health care, transitional care, meal delivery and hospice. It is

an affiliate of Catholic Senior Services, the outreach program created by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to meet the growing need for quality senior housing and services.

Joe Stanislav, president and CEO of Franciscan Health Community, said he began negotiations with the archdiocese about six months ago.

"Our goal is as much as possible to try to follow [the sisters'] legacy there," Stanislav said in a phone interview. "There will probably be some minor changes, but all in all we think the care and the reputation of the home have been so wonderful all these years. We really thought, as an organization,

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## Faith questions bore fruitful discussions

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one from a sarcoma cancer support group suggested that one way to help was to organize meals for the family.

Andrea Massari, who met Emilie through an early childhood family education class and organized a continuing play group for the children in the group, said she picked up the task because she is an organizer by nature.

Besides continuing to organize meals for Steve and the boys, Massari, 32, said she wants to keep Daniel and Benjamin involved in the play group, and to keep Steve in their lives as well.

"I really admired the amount of effort [Emilie] put into her parenting decisions," Massari said. "Her parenting style was thoughtful. Every decision she made for those boys had a lot of thought behind it and research."

Massari also appreciated Emilie's honesty about her faith.

"She questioned her faith just as I was questioning my faith," Massari said. "She helped me to achieve some clarity on what I believe and what I think."

A self-admitted lapsed Catholic, Massari said she is looking at returning to the church because she believes it is important for children to have that faith structure. She and her husband, Aaron, have a daughter, Calla, 18 months, and

a child on the way.

"While being a very spiritual and faithful person, [Emilie] had her own questions and that was comforting to me, that someone with as strong a faith as she had questions," she said.

Freelance writer Roxane Salonen was among the many people who never met Emilie in person but talked with her electronically. Both belonged to a writers group, and when Emilie was diagnosed with cancer, Salonen, who is a member of Sts. Anne and Joachim in Fargo, N.D., with her husband, Troy, and their five children, was drawn to her because both of the 40-year-old mothers were weaning their children.

"Emilie showed me and reminded me that sometimes being at home, being with her children, engaging in life fully where we're at is how we intermingle with the world and with God," she said.

Emilie's honest, creative writing drew an amazing amount of support, Massari said. People who never met Emilie wanted to do something.

So, in June, Rodenberg and two of Emilie's close childhood friends set up a fund to which people could contribute. Donations may be sent to: "Emilie's Fund" (fund No. 123), Care of TCF Bank, 2163 Ford Parkway, St. Paul, MN 55116.

## Sisters cared for nearly 10,000 patients

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

that we'd love to see that continue, and we feel like we have the means to do that."

Stanislav said under his organization's leadership, Our Lady of Good Counsel Home will continue to provide free care for patients and their families.

Our Lady of Good Counsel opened on Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 1941, with five sisters. Over the years, the home has served nearly 10,000 patients, according to Kay O'Keefe, OLGC chairperson.

In his column in this issue of The Catholic Spirit (see page 2), Archbishop John Nienstedt said that the order's provincial informed him of the decision to leave Our Lady of Good Counsel last May due to declining membership in the order, reducing the number of cancer homes the sisters run in the United States and Africa to four. In recent years, the order has closed two cancer homes — in Ohio and Massachusetts.

The six Hawthorne Dominican sisters currently serving at Our Lady of Good Counsel Home will return to their motherhouse in New York.

When Joan Decker, who began volunteering at Our Lady of Good Counsel Home 28 years ago, learned that the sisters would be leaving St. Paul, she said, "It broke my heart."

Over the years, the junior-high religion teacher at St. Agnes School in St. Paul has volunteered at Our Lady of Good Counsel in different capacities, such as ironing the sisters' habits and organizing a softball tournament to raise money for their ministry.

The sisters are like part of her family, said Decker, whose son, Dominic, 21, is named after the sisters' order; her son, Patrick, is named after the late Sister Mary Patrick, with whom Decker was especially close.

The sisters attended important family functions, such as graduations and first Communion, and also cared for Decker's father in his final days before he died from lung cancer in 2004.

"On any given day, you'd see the sisters rubbing the backs of the patients and just comforting them in their final hours and treating them just like they were our Lord," said Decker. "Their love for their patients, just to help them pass to eternal life, was always so beautiful to me."

"I'd say to them, 'How can you do this day in and day out and be so joyful?'" Decker added. "And they'd say, 'Because we're helping people get to heaven.'"

The sisters declined to comment on the transition until the Vatican gives them permission.



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