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Carr: Church Must Defend the Poor

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Distinctly Catholic

In an impassioned speech to the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering yesterday, John Carr, executive director of the USCCB's committee on justice, peace and human development, called on Congress and the White House not to balance to budget on the backs of the poor. "If the administration and the Congress will not speak up for the poor, we will," Carr told the participants in the meeting.

Carr called attention to the horrific fact that poverty rates are at their highest levels in twenty years and that "the younger you are in America the more likely you are to live in poverty." He invoked Matthew 25, saying that the "moral measure" of budgetary decisions is how they treat the poor and vulnerable.

Mentioning Tea Party leader Michelle Bachmann by name, Carr asked, "What happened to compassionate conservatism?" Carr also asserted that cutting funding for projects that fight malaria is "not pro-life" and that "contempt for immigrants, even illegal immigrants, is not a moral option. Carr acknowledged there was a need to reform some social programs. He said that some housing programs do more to assist banks than they do to help low income tenants.

In one of the most important parts of his speech, Carr acknowledged the divisions within the Catholic community over last year's health care legislation but urged that those divisions be set aside. "We are united [now]: let's fix health care not repeal it." He urged Catholics engaged in politics to evidence civility in their actions and words. "We're family and we have to act like family."

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