

## **Legislative Rally Days**

*By: Jennifer Carr, Associate Director of the Texas Catholic Conference*

The 80<sup>th</sup> Texas legislative session is in full swing. For legislators and lobbyists, this means hours of committee hearings and thousands of bills to read, debate, and work to pass or fight to fail. For advocates, it is time to bring attention to causes and issues at a time when public attention can translate into new laws. The Church comes together during session to highlight the moral dimensions of issues through the public policy efforts of the Texas Catholic Conference and advocate rally days focused on issues of importance to the Bishops and the Church.

### **Catholic Health Association Day:**

January 30, 2007

The Catholic Health Association of Texas responds to the call of the Gospel by advocating for health care policies and programs that provide quality, affordable and accessible health care for everyone in Texas. They focus especially on the needs of the poor and vulnerable persons in our state and promote collaboration among Catholic health care providers and other ministries and organizations. They will be at the Capitol doing legislative visits as well as hosting a reception for members of the Legislature the evening of their visits.

### **Catholic Charities Day:**

February 6, 2007

More than 400 staff, volunteers, and clients of Catholic Charities agencies from throughout Texas will rally on the capitol steps and then be honored in the Texas House of Representatives and Texas Senate. After all of this pomp and circumstance, these advocates will visit every member of the Texas Legislature to urge them to join Catholic Charities in providing help and creating hope for the poor and vulnerable of Texas. Catholic Charities will be asking legislators to increase their investment in the Children's Health Insurance Program and Medicaid, improve foster care and adoption services in Texas. In addition, they will remind legislators of the valuable contributions of immigrants to our states economy and culture and ask the Legislature to resist efforts to deny them access to healthcare and education. The Catholic Charities Advocacy Day is an opportunity for many supporters of Catholic Charities to directly interact with representatives at the Capitol and ask them to work for solutions to the cycles that keep people in poverty.

### **School Choice Day:**

February 7, 2007

School choice is an important part of our Catholic education agenda in Texas. Our catholic schools have benefited from a variety of scholarship programs that have given an opportunity to many children that would not have been able to attend our schools otherwise. The Education Freedom Rally at the Texas Capitol will include various Catholic schools and groups from throughout the state. The plan is to get as many school choice supporters from the state to show up at the Texas Capitol and show our dedication to our communities and children.

### **Respect Life Day:**

March 6, 2007

Our foundational principle to protect the life and dignity of all human persons calls us to work to end abortion, euthanasia, destruction of human embryos, cloning, assisted suicide, and the death penalty. While there will be a Pro-Life mass and march in Austin on January 27, the official Catholic Respect Life Day will take place March 6, 2006. Directors of respect life ministries are working bring volunteers to the Capitol to support life and dignity of the human person from conception to natural death.