

# It is time for leaders to lead

## EDITORIAL

Difficult times require difficult choices. For the single mother struggling with a sick child, does she stay home from work or beg friends or neighbors to stay with the child so she can earn next month's rent? For the father with a balky car, does he have the engine serviced to try to extend its usefulness, or does he have the leaky roof fixed? For the senior on a fixed income, does she fill her prescription for her blood pressure, or the one for her diabetes?

The Legislature is facing similar difficult choices. The state budget is certainly not the only thing on its agenda this year; however, it is the issue that will impact everyone living in Idaho. The choices begin broad and quickly narrow: Facing a deficit, do we raise revenues or cut expenses? Most Idahoans prefer fewer, not more, taxes, so the

choice before legislators now is where to cut.

Every decision has consequences. Cut funding to parks, and there will be less access to recreational and natural resources. Cut funding to public television, and jobs will be lost, as well as valuable, affordable programming not available from other sources. Cut funding to education, and a fundamental commitment to Idaho's youths – and the state's future economic viability – is compromised.

This is why elections are so vital to America: They identify leaders empowered to make difficult decisions. Each year in Idaho, legislators – these men and women of character, intelligence and skill – convene to do as they have been empowered – to lead.

We urge these people of vision to remember that the mantle they bear represents all Idahoans, not merely the wealthy, the visible or the vocal. Their responsibility is also to the poor, the hungry and the homeless. Indeed, responsible leaders dare not rest until those they represent have food on their tables, roofs over their heads and hope in their future.

Legislators' responsibility is not to those who clamor for less government or more government; their responsibility is to create and sustain a just, wise government. What sheep herder would desert part of the flock merely because they lag behind? What rancher would abandon the slower cattle in favor of the heartier, stronger ones? If our leaders, given our blessing, act any other way than to protect those hurt most during these difficult times, then what does it say

about we who elected them?

We urge legislators to serve the needs of the poor. We call on them to maintain the Grocery Tax Credit, to increase revenues by rolling back tax exemptions, set-asides and credits to large corporations, and to not take another single cent from public education or programs that serve the needs of the poor.

We unflinchingly profess that our leaders are decent, honest, honorable people of principle and vision. We recognize the difficulty that comes with leadership: the responsibility that they are called to exercise. We now remind them that as the details and weight of budget constraints bear down, the fundamental principles remain unchanged. Idaho isn't Wall Street, or Washington or Los Angeles. This is Idaho, where all – especially the poor – have a place at the table.

## Christ's cross bears the weight of Haiti's pain

The little girl had gone missing and the whole neighborhood was conducting a desperate search. Her father found her in a small ditch barely four inches deep. I cannot forget the sound of her mother's pain. Then, she hugged the limp toddler close and planted kisses on her cold blue lips.

The family asked me to do the funeral. I then faced my own anguish: What was I supposed to say? I was, literally, only a boy priest. How was I going to make sense out of tragedy and relieve the flow of inconsolable grief?


The tragedy in Haiti makes me feel the same way. The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, a nation without resources and almost without the structures that distinguish a struggling country from a failed state, is ravaged by an earthquake. Two hundred thousand are dead. One out of four are homeless. A U.S. Marine, a veteran of battles in Iraq and Afghanistan, is sent to Haiti and struck speechless by what he finds.

I lived awhile among the poorest of the poor; poor families live day-to-day. There are no reserves of any kind. A day without work means a day without food. I can imagine the broken water lines and the raw sewage in the streets. I can see vultures high in the sky, drawn by the stink of the dead. I can envision the stumbling army of the living.

In a world governed by a good God, we ask "Why?"

An atheist asks the question and it drives him further into disbelief. A person of faith asks the question and finds himself in a desert place where easy answers echo off the stark cliffs like the ravings of a

*In the  
Midst of  
God's  
Abundance*



**By Father William Taylor**

mad man. Why, indeed.

One answer seems obvious enough. The earth grinds with the movement of continental plates driven by stupendous pressures. The great rafts of stone develop faults and these faults create earthquakes. People live above faults and the ground beneath them is certain to shake and give way. To stop the earthquakes you would have to stop the planet.

Who would be foolish enough to live in a danger zone? If you live south of Seattle or in the heavily populated area along the San Andreas Fault, you have put your family in harm's way. You can only hope the "Big One" will come in somebody else's lifetime.

Haiti met its "Big One." Now the world is put to the test. Can others come with mercy? The first doctors on hand were from Cuba. Other nations mount an enormous rescue effort while our Marines maintain order and try to rebuild a damaged airport and all those roads and bridges.

To say nature is to blame is only a small part of the answer. Haiti is Lazarus underfoot near the rich man's table. Somebody has to get him to a better place where he can heal his sores.

However, it is hard, hard, hard for a poor nation to climb out of poverty and provide a life for its people. In part, it's because the nation lacks the laws to maintain economic security and the leadership to enforce those laws. For most of its history, Haiti has been in the hands of thugs who trample the people. The welfare of their nation is the last thought on their minds.

It is also because the larger world doesn't quite know how to help. Invade the country and try to bring a stable democracy and a more successful government? Well, we tried that in Iraq for a while.

I heard on the news that the major players are going to call a meeting of experts (whoever they are) and try to find a better answer.

In the meanwhile, I am reminded again why Catholics continue to portray Christ on the cross. He can never come down – not as long as the little ones perish of war, disease or disaster. He remains there, tortured and pierced, one with his brothers and sisters. The Word of God's love tastes every tragedy. The rain that falls on Haiti is the residue of God's bitter tears.

*Editor's note: To donate to Haitian relief, go to the Catholic Relief Services Web site, [www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org).*

*Father Taylor is the author of two books on Mormonism and has penned several award-winning pieces for the ICR over the years.*

## Catholic schools offer 'Dividends for Life'

By Daniel D. Makley  
Superintendent of Schools

Several years ago, I wrote in the *Idaho Catholic Register* that the best gift my parents ever gave to me and my siblings was our Catholic school education. We attribute our active faith, ethics, work habits and overall success in life primarily to the things we learned in Catholic school. Of course, values and expectations in our family paralleled what we learned in school. Working together, the home and the Catholic school are the best of all possible environments for children.

"Dividends for Life" is the theme for Catholic Schools

Week this year. The dividends are specifically identified as faith, knowledge, discipline and morals. These dividends reiterate and reinforce my belief in the unique value of our Catholic schools, value that you cannot get anywhere else. Catholic schools in Idaho teach and practice the Catholic faith. They provide a knowledge base that ensures a skill level by which students can be successful in future education or on a job. Discipline refers to self-control, respect for others and excellent work and study habits. The 1,000 hours students spend in Catholic schools each year provide a powerful moral foundation for

everyone in the school: Staff, students and volunteers alike. These dividends continue to be evident in Catholic schools throughout our country. Here in the Diocese of Boise, I am particularly proud of the Catholic identity our schools display. Students in our schools have weekly Mass, daily prayer, daily instruction in the Catholic religion and frequent opportunities to practice their faith through interaction with peers and adults and through service to others.

As we look to the future, challenges are clearly in view. How can we enroll all Catholic students who desire a Catholic school education, regardless

of their ability to pay? How can we make Catholic schools available in locations where there are currently no Catholic schools? How can we balance those needs with fair pay and working conditions for the many dedicated people who work in our schools? How can we encourage new immigrants to attend our schools as previous generations have done? As we wrestle with these challenges, the diocesan Catholic School Office is always eager to hear from anyone offering helpful solutions or ideas.

During Catholic Schools Week, celebrated Jan. 31-Feb. 6 in most places, you are invited to visit your local Catholic

school. You may see special days and events, including art and writing exhibitions, math and speech contests and special assemblies honoring students, priests, teachers and families. Many schools will have religious ceremonies such as living rosaries, special Masses and prayer services. There may be fund-raising and friend-raising dinners and open houses. Schools continue efforts to provide aid to victims of the earthquake in Haiti. There are many interesting and exciting things to see: take advantage of the opportunity. You will be impressed, and the schools will be glad to see you.