NCWC - USCCB at 100
A century working for the common good – 1917 to 2017
Jan Henryk de Rosen’s painting shows Cardinal Gibbons blessing Rev. John Burke, CSP who holds the National Catholic Welfare Conference charter. Burke was General Secretary until 1936. This part of the mural is located on the 5th floor in the reception area of the Office of the General Secretariat.
When in 1917 the United States entered WWI, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore wrote to President Woodrow Wilson offering the loyalty and resources of the American Catholic Church saying “Our people, as ever, will rise as one man to serve the nation.”
Rev. John J. Burke, CSP was selected as the first general secretary of the NCWC when the bishops gathered at Catholic University in 1917 to initiate the council.
The National Catholic War Council’s chaplaincy program resulted in nearly a 1,500 chaplains by war’s end. They worked closely with the Knights of Columbus to provide spiritual and recreational activities for all U.S. soldiers heading to war.
With this huge mobilization, chaplains were in great demand.
In 1919, the special war work of the NCWC included the overseas workers that were sent to war ravaged Europe to assist the local populations and provide community centers for soldiers awaiting transport back to the U.S.
The contribution of the overseas workers following the war was documented in a book written by Marguerite Boylan called “They Shall Live Again.”
The Americans taught work skills to young women and widows and fed and housed them in cities in Poland, Belgium, Italy and France.
They also assisted orphans and refugees whose homes and livelihoods had been destroyed by the long war.
This post war work helped allow stricken populations to be restored spiritually and economically. By late 1920 they returned stateside.

They also honored the American dead we left behind.
Pope Benedict Blesses National Catholic Welfare Council's News Service

To the National Catholic Welfare Council:

"The Holy Father has learned with much pleasure the establishment of the National Catholic Press Bureau. His Holiness most cordially extends the Apostolic Blessing to the service you have inaugurated to improve the Catholic papers of the United States. The work of the American Catholic papers has been most praiseworthy. They have been an effective auxiliary to the papacy in spreading the Faith. This credit to which they are entitled is enhanced by the difficulties they have had to meet. Those who are conducting them will be pleased and honored by your establishment in their behalf."

Cardinal Gasparri

CARDINAL GASPARRI

HOME IS READY FOR CEREMONY OF CROWNING

Catholic Church Leads in Honors by Government

Pope's Visit to Washington

NEW SENSES OF THE FUTURE

Catholic GIVEN IMPORTANT POST IN ENGLAND

HOLY CITY'S ROLE NOT FOR CEREMONIES TO BE CEREMONIAL

Washington, March 15. The Washington press yesterday was the scene of a most heartening demonstration of the interest which the Catholic church is taking in the American Catholic press. The Pope's visit to Washington is to be accompanied by a large delegation of American Catholic bishops and priests, who will be in charge of the papal train. A large number of Catholic priests and laymen will be in attendance on the occasion. The Pope's visit will be for the purpose of furthering the spiritual welfare of the Church. The Pope's visit will be a great event in the history of the Church in America. The Pope's visit will be a most significant event in the history of the Church.
Pope Benedict XV gave his approval to the Welfare Council in 1920.

NCWC’s program of Social Reconstruction influenced by the teachings of Pope Leo XIII.

And ultimately, Pope Pius XI ended the brief suppression of the NCWC in 1922 after an appeal by the American Archbishops that comprised the Executive Committee of the Council. Council became Conference for canonical reasons resulting in the

National Catholic Welfare Conference
GENERAL OBJECTIVES

TO SERVE as the channel for the interchange of information and service between the Conference and the laity in their common work for the Church.

TO BE a central clearing house of information regarding activities of Catholic men and women.

TO PROMOTE, under ecclesiastical supervision, unity and cooperation among clergy and laity in matters that affect the general welfare of the Church and the Nation.

TO AID existing Catholic organizations to work more effectively in their own localities.

TO COOPERATE in furthering the aims of all approved movements in the interests of the Church and society at large.

TO PARTICIPATE, through Catholic lay representation, in national and international movements involving moral questions.

TO BRING ABOUT a better understanding and a more widespread appreciation of Catholic principles and ideals in our educational, social and civic life.
ESSENTIAL CONSIDERATIONS
In the Collection of Catholic World War Records

PARISH War Records are the main source of the central and permanent collection, maintained by the National Catholic War Council.

All parishes have not developed Honor Rolls. The N. C. W. C. may have wholly inadequate war records for your community. Ask the N. C. W. C. about your local Catholic war records. Parish War Service lists can be developed and many supplemented by study and check with Community records. Additional names of Catholics are invariably found when so checked.

Assist that the N. C. W. C. has records of the Catholic diocese in your community. Make certain that Catholic news from your community entered by decrees or citations are properly noted in the N. C. W. C. collection.

Promote the interest of Catholics in your local war memorials and war records commissions. Advise the N. C. W. C. of publications of towns, counties or states that mention World War Service.

There are thousands of competent and interested Catholics, who would be especially devoted to this particular work among the Gold Star Mothers, veterans organizations and auxiliaries of various groups.

Local committees on war records should be working groups determined to identify and preserve the war records of their fellow Catholics.

Records submitted by individuals, societies and committees are accepted, if the cases are certified as Catholics.

Frequently the American Catholic has occasion to refer to the citizenship record of his countrymen. The Catholic war record is not maintained in governmental data. It depends upon local study and scrutiny of records by interested Catholic officials.

That record invites your active interest.

FROM: Father Burke
August 31, 1939,

TO: Mr. J. J. Hynes, Bureau of Historical Records


In March, 1939, the Bureau of Historical Records moved its offices and materials in a fire-proof building provided for the safe keeping of the records. All records pertaining to the World War data are now housed in these quarters with the adoption of the war time files of Catholic publications which will require special steel rooms and fixtures and so forth.

A pictorial exhibit of the work of the National Catholic War Council has been started in the entrance hall of the Records Building.

The Bureau prepared a sixteen page pamphlet outlining the purposes of the compilation and the work incident to the collection of facts on the Catholic contribution to the national effort during the World War period. Suggested methods and a catalogue of sources were included for the benefit of committees of the lay organizations that are developing the work locally. Valuable facts concerning the N. C. W. C. as a whole were also presented in this work.

Several thousand copies have been distributed by the N. C. W. C. and N. C. W. The Bureau has noted a pleasant response on this guide from interested committees as well as organizations and committees engaged with World War records. The editor of The Ecclesiastical Review requested 500 copies of the work of the Bureau after seeing the pamphlet on the N. C. W. C. World War Records.

Since December, 1939, the Bureau has supplied to the Feature Service of the N. C. W. C. Press Department a weekly feature in outstanding Catholic heroes of the World War. These have proved an interest in the collection. Parents, ex-service men, churches and others have presented facts of great value in the collection after noting the accuracy of statements released in these feature articles.

Federal legislation enacted March 2, 1939, allows the mothers and widows of the A. E. F. dead now buried overseas to visit the American cemeteries in France at the expense of the Government. The lack of reaching the mothers and widows of these soldiers is admitted to be difficult in the majority of cases. The Society of American War Mothers (World War) has asked the cooperation of the N. C. W. C. through the Bureau in locating Catholic mothers. The office of the Quarter-Master Corps in charge of cemeteries has stated that it rely on the help our records may give as they have estimated their possibilities in reaching the Gold Star Mothers through the emergency address presented by the soldier at the time of the war.

Active cooperation with the effort of the Government in respect to these pilgrimages will allow another public recognition of the N. C. W. C. war data, and the effectiveness of the local committees of the la! organizations interested in records and incident material. It will also develop additional records of Catholics buried in these cemeteries. Cooperation with the American War Mothers, although we have...
Pope Leo XIII’s Encyclical Rerum Novarum influenced the NCWC’s Program of Social Reconstruction 30 years later.
The NCWC had occupied a house at 930 14th Street before moving to this building near Thomas Circle, NW in the early 1920s.

Following WWI, Rev. John A. Ryan of the Social Action Department published pastoral letters for the post war world. Believing that justice in the world could prevent future wars, they pushed for universal health care, fair wages, the abolition of child labor as well as support for unions. Many of the ideas influenced President Roosevelt’s New Deal.
Unfortunately this pursuit of justice did not result in the peace they sought and the conference once again picked up its role of offering spiritual support to those at war.
In World War II, the National Catholic Welfare Conference continued to distribute aid to populations affected by war. Catholic Relief Services grew out of the work of the Bishops’ War Relief Services. Emphasis on resettling refugees grew exponentially following WWII. NCWC worked in the U.S. and helped settlement programs in other countries where established programs didn’t exist.

The new headquarters building grew up at 1312 Massachusetts Ave. and was dedicated to Christ, Light of the World.
Help from the U.S. even made it to Pope Pius XII in Rome. Here his Holiness inspects bread made with flour supplied by the Bishops’ Fund for Victims of War.
Below right Polish DPs released from Siberian labor camps arriving in Mexico stand next to a war relief services bus. Eileen Egan, an immigrant herself is center.

Food programs in post WWII Paris and in Vienna
The pastoral care and resettlement of immigrants and refugees continued into the Cold War.
They came from all over the world.
WANTED - Warmth for Winter!

For HIS sake and theirs -
Give Generously!

HIS NAME...

for all HIS children...
Give Generously

CLOTHING
BLANKETS
SHOES

GIVE TO THE
CATHOLIC BISHOPS’
THANKSGIVING CLOTHING COLLECTION
for KOREA, and refugees in EUROPE, the NEAR and FAR EAST

THANKSGIVING WEEK
Nov. 23-30, 1952 • In All Catholic Parishes

The BISHOPS’ FUND
for the Victims of War

1951 CHILDREN’S COLLECTION

On behalf of the
BISHOPS’ EMERGENCY RELIEF COMMITTEE
and WAR RELIEF SERVICES - NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE

Your Parish Collection Center Will Welcome Any Gifts of Desperately Needed Clothing!
The many ways American Catholics, through the NCWC, helped their fellow man.
In 1958 the Bishops called for an end to segregation. The social upheaval of the 1960s brought consensus among the church leadership that more had to be done. They were also encouraged by the Holy Father. The Campaign for Human Development began in 1969.
The 1960s meant new dialogue within the church with the Second Vatican Council, church involvement in the Civil Rights movement, peace initiatives and the rights of organized labor and migrant workers.
In 1966, in response to a mandate from the Second Vatican Council, the NCWC was reorganized into the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference. The membership of both were the bishops themselves. The NCCB was an ecclesiastical association as distinct from the USCC which was a civil corporation, a non-profit under the statutes of the District of Columbia. The Vatican decree Christus Dominus wanted bishops of each country to organize themselves into a national assembly of bishops like the U.S. had done in 1917. In many ways the American Church was the model.

In late 1991 an ad hoc Committee on Mission and Structure began the process of examining the theological status of the NCCB/USCC and to review the conferences’ missions and goals. The primary focus was to encourage greater participation by the bishops and give a sense of greater unity.

With that push for unity came proposed consolidation of the NCCB and USCC into a single conference but there was no consensus on how the final reorganization should look. This process took nearly a decade before the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was ultimately realized in 2001.

There is a very detailed account of this process written by our former Secretary for Communications for the New Catholic Encyclopedia and I encourage you to come to the library on the 3rd floor to inform yourselves because I’m only give you a cursory telling of the story today.
In 1917, the bishops of the U.S. formed the National Catholic War Council (NCWC).

- 161 Active diocesan bishops.
- 6 Cardinals currently leading archdioceses.
- 196 Archdioceses in the country.
- 466 Active and retired bishops in the U.S.
- 26 Active archbishops.
On November 12, 2017 the USCCB celebrated its 100th year as “one and indivisible.”
QUESTIONS?

Interested in more information?

Please go to our website click ‘about USCCB’ and see the Centenary Timeline. (Additions welcome)

Furthermore, https://thecatholicnewsarchive.org has the NCWC News Service(CNS) news feeds 1920-1957 and the Catholic World in Pictures digitized and fully searchable.

The Catholic Communication Campaign has generously provided grant money to complete the digitization and all of the content will be freely available by the end of 2018.

There are war records and the NCWC Bulletin digitized at the American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives at CUA.
Photos courtesy of Catholic News Service Archives, USCCB Archives, Center for Migration Studies and American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives

Katherine Nuss, Information and Archive Service
knuss@usccb.org