

## **KENTUCKY STUDENT RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR HELPING YOUTH GRASP SOCIAL JUSTICE**

WASHINGTON – (November 9, 2007) David Golemboski, 22, a student leader in the social justice community of Louisville, Kentucky, is the 2007 recipient of the Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award. The annual award, established in 1998, honors young Catholics who demonstrate leadership in fighting poverty and injustice in the United States.

The Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award is presented each year by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), a national program of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which provides grants to community-based, self-help groups that are addressing the root causes of poverty. The program also works to educate Americans about social problems that contribute to poverty in order to raise awareness about poverty and its deep impact on this country.

The award honors Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (1928-1996), former archbishop of Chicago and a leading voice on behalf of poor and low-income people, who understood the need to build bridges across ethnic, economic, class and age barriers. The award will be presented Monday, November 12, in Baltimore, during the USCCB's annual meeting.

Golemboski is in his first year at Harvard Divinity School, pursuing a Masters degree in religion, ethics and politics. In his last two years as an undergraduate at the University of Louisville, he was also the associate director of CrossRoads Ministry, a group he had earlier served as a volunteer. CrossRoads is an inner-city retreat center that engages high school- and college-aged people in peacemaking through urban experiences.

Golemboski said, "CrossRoads brings young people from the suburbs to a part of the city they might not visit and encourages a transformation of vision and lifestyle by encountering people who live so close geographically, but lead such different lives."

CrossRoads is a ministry of St. William Church and has been supported by the Church of the Epiphany. Golemboski is active in both Louisville parishes. He was nominated for the Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award by the pastoral leadership of both parishes.

Sharan Benton, St. William's pastoral administrator and Reverend John Burke, pastor, said, "David has left an indelible mark on the lives of many high school teens and their families, as well as on the inner city community of St. William's. He is a young man of deep spiritual insight, uncommon dedication and compassion.

"David played a vital role in developing CrossWalk, a week-long justice immersion experience that has impacted the lives of more than one hundred teens in Louisville. As a member of the CrossRoads staff, David has led and helped shape innovative retreats that have brought high school teens into 'unlikely friendships' and expressions of deep solidarity with the people of Louisville's inner city."

Reverend Jeff Nicolas, pastor of Epiphany, said, "David has demonstrated his leadership among his peers and to the community at large. While he was in high school, he worked with the parish youth minister on the catechetical curriculum for Confirmation youth. He made significant contributions to the program that focused on helping young people to understand and experience the social mission of the church and the responsibilities to our brothers and sisters.

"For the past two years, David has also co-chaired the social responsibility steering committee at Epiphany, (where) he has represented the call for justice and concern for the broken world on our parish pastoral council. He is articulate, thoughtful and effective in communicating about complex and potentially polarizing issues."

Golemboski participated in the pilot year of JusticeWalking, a youth and young adult program of JustFaith Ministries, a national parish education program based in Louisville. CCHD and JustFaith Ministries work closely on the Journey to Justice immersion and awareness program. JusticeWalking is now offered in dozens of dioceses throughout the United States.

Golemboski is a member of the steering committee of the Louisville Fellowship of Reconciliation, which he describes as an umbrella group for faith-based peacemaking. The group, he said, "coordinates many local efforts to pursue less militaristic systems and a more peaceful world order, including a program for conflict resolution training in Louisville schools."

As a high school student, Golemboski developed an interest in Thomas Merton. “If you want to study Thomas Merton, Louisville is the place to be,” he laughed, noting its proximity to the Abbey of Gethsemani, where Merton spent much of his life. “I was trying to understand myself as a Catholic and as a person of faith and figure how to engage with the rest of the world. Thomas Merton was so deliberate in being very engaged in his personal faith in such a way that it could be relevant to the rest of the world. He was very influential in my formation.”

Golemboski is a recognized Thomas Merton scholar and has made presentations to national and international conferences of Merton groups. He said, “Merton is really relevant to young Catholics, because he showed how you can be deeply prayerful and spiritual and still deeply engaged in the world around you.”

Golemboski spent a college semester in Mexico, studying and working for the San Luis Potosí State Commission for Human Rights. He said, “I assisted lawyers in following up on reports of human rights violations by agents of the state government. It helped me to understand my academic pursuits as they related to human rights. It was not abstract – I could see that there’s a place for my studies to be connected to action.”

CCHD Interim Executive Director John Carr said, “David has used his considerable gifts to bring diverse communities together in Louisville. David has helped other youth to open their eyes and hearts to the poor. He has led them to prayerfully explore their own reactions to poverty, question societal structures that cause it and work for justice at home and abroad. David’s ability to express his Catholic faith through leadership and action inspires us at CCHD and I congratulate David and his supportive family as he receives the Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award.”

The Cardinal Bernardin New Leadership Award is presented to a young Catholic between the ages of 18 and 30 who demonstrates leadership to bring about long-term, community-based solutions to poverty in the United States. The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is one of the nation’s largest funders of self-help, community-based programs initiated and led by the poor. Funded by an annual collection in Catholic parishes across the country, CCHD has distributed more than \$300 million to more than 7,800 self-help projects over its 37 years. This year, CCHD announced more than \$9.5

million in grants to support 314 local projects, selected without regard to religious affiliation, in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

*Editors: For more information about CCHD, visit [www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd). For more information about the Bernardin Award, contact Jill Rauh at 202-541-3297.*

#####