

Catholic Charities USA Saddened By Loss of Tireless Champion for the Poor—Msgr. Edward Ryle of Arizona

The following is a statement by Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA.

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. John 12:24-25

Today, the poor and the vulnerable lost a great ally; Arizona lost a great statesman; Catholic Charities lost a great friend; and the Catholic Church lost a great priest. A tireless champion for the less fortunate, Msgr. Edward Ryle dedicated his priestly ministry to serving the less fortunate and disadvantaged.

Msgr. Ryle was a voice of faith in the public square, speaking for the voiceless, with an abiding commitment to social justice and human dignity. He was a man of passion. He was a man of great faith. Whatever the issue, he had a view - strongly held - rooted in Catholic social teaching - forcefully offered - and vigorously defended.

In September, Catholic Charities USA presented its 2005 Vision Award to Msgr. Ryle, a committed social reformer and advocate, who lobbied for the benefit of Arizona's downtrodden as executive director of the Arizona Catholic Conference for more than 18 years.

The annual Vision Award recognizes an individual who through his or her life and work personifies Catholic Charities USA's vision for the new millennium. Msgr. Ryle was recognized for his tireless lobbying efforts to help underprivileged Arizonans.

Msgr. Ryle was born and grew up in Chicago, Illinois. His high school years were spent at Quigley Preparatory Seminary and upon graduation he entered Pontifical College Josephinum from 1949-1956 in Worthington, Ohio. In 1956, Msgr. Ryle was ordained to serve the Diocese of Tucson.

A highly educated priest, Msgr. Ryle went on to receive his Master of Social Work from Catholic University in Washington D.C. and his Masters in Divinity from Josephinum. More degrees followed.

Msgr. Ryle served as director of Catholic Charities of Arizona (now Catholic Social Service of Northern and Central Arizona) from 1967-1971; and as assistant professor for the National Catholic School of Social Service at Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., from 1971-1977. He served as dean

of the graduate school of social work at Marywood College, Scranton, Pennsylvania, from 1977 to 1984.

Returning to Arizona in September 1984, he was named Executive Director of the Arizona Catholic Conference. During his years with the Arizona Catholic Conference, Msgr. Ryle successfully lobbied for economic aid for the poor and disabled and also helped abolish the death penalty for the mentally retarded. He retired on January 1, 2003.

Following his retirement, Msgr. Ryle served on the boards of the Foundation for Senior Living and Catholic Social Service of Central and Northern Arizona. He also was the Spiritual Advisor to the St. Vincent de Paul Council in Phoenix, on the board of the Healthcare Institute, a member of the Bioethics Committee of St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center, on the Religious Advisory Committee of the Arizona Department of Corrections and on the Arizona Agriculture Employment Relations Board.

Just this past year, Msgr. Ryle established a lecture series to benefit the Msgr. Ryle Field of Interest Fund through the Catholic Community Foundation. The proceeds from the lecture series fund grants for projects that address major social justice issues in Arizona and grow the fund's endowment.

Services will take place Jan. 5 at St. Augustine Cathedral in Tucson. A wake is scheduled from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m., with a funeral Mass to follow.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.
Amen.