



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE + ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON + DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

****EMBARGOED UNTIL WEDNESDAY, JULY 30, 2008****

Comments on Dick Dowling's Retirement and the Appointment of Mary Ellen Russell

Baltimore Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien, chairman of the Conference's Board of Governors:

Catholic conference directors and their staff are often unheralded for the work they do to advance the mission of the Church. Their work is critically important to the local Church and the issues with which they deal touch on nearly every major tenet of our faith: pro-life, education, family life, and social concerns, just to name a few.

Under the leadership of Dick Dowling, the Maryland Catholic Conference has advocated the Catholic Church's position on these and other issues with clarity and conviction. Dick is known and respected by nearly everyone in Annapolis, whether legislator, staffer, or lobbyist, and his candid but always pleasant demeanor has well-positioned the Conference and the Church it represents in Annapolis. Evidently, Dick's peers agree; a publication noted that Catholic Conference directors, in a recent poll, named the Maryland Catholic Conference as the best in the country.

While we are saddened to hear of Dick's retirement, we are thrilled to have someone equally respected and known throughout Annapolis as Mary Ellen Russell. She has skillfully and successfully advanced the mission of our Catholic schools in Annapolis for many years and has earned the praise and respect of legislators and others along the way. I am confident that she will capably fill the very large shoes that Dick leaves behind.

Washington Archbishop Donald W. Wuerl:

As Richard Dowling completes his long service as executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference I congratulate him on an extraordinary accomplishment and wish him well. His leadership and skill have won the esteem and respect of legislators, colleagues and media alike. He will be greatly missed. As he begins this new chapter in his life, may God continue to bless him.

The appointment of Mary Ellen Russell as the new executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference is welcome news. I have had the pleasure of working with Mary Ellen both through the Maryland Catholic Conference and also through the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Her longstanding association with the Maryland Catholic Conference, her many gifts and recognized achievements will serve her well as she takes on this new challenge. I look forward to working with her.

Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli, Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Wilmington:

I have had the privilege of being associated with Dick Dowling and the Maryland Catholic Conference these past 12 and a half years. He is a man dedicated to the Church and its teachings. He brings a calm but strong presence to his office and he will surely be missed in the Conference. I have learned much from him, particularly his passion for justice in our world. I wish him only good.

I am pleased at the appointment of Mary Ellen Russell to succeed Dick Dowling as executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference. I do not believe there is anyone more qualified to lead the Conference office than Mary Ellen. She is highly respected by the bishops she has served and is well known in legislative halls. Her dedication to the work of the Conference suits her well for the position.

Richard J. Dowling:

What I'm mostly feeling is gratitude. I'm grateful for the opportunity given me to serve in this way. I'm grateful to the Maryland-serving bishops for their support and trust, and to all the good people in the parishes and diocesan offices who've contributed in so many ways to our education and advocacy efforts. Most especially am I grateful to the women and men of the Conference's staff, past and present; when I hang up my sneakers later this year, it'll be their company I'll miss most.

I couldn't be happier about the choice of my successor. Mary Ellen Russell is an extraordinary person and a tireless, convincing advocate for the Church and her interests. For good reason, policy makers and those with whom she has worked in the Church community trust her judgment, value her leadership and admire her zeal. Under her tutelage, the only direction the Conference can take in the coming years is up, and it will move upward at high speed, I have no doubt.

Mary Ellen Russell:

I am honored, humbled, and deeply grateful to the bishops of Maryland for giving me the opportunity to take on the position of the Conference's executive director. As I assume this new position, I know, too, that I owe much to the grace of God, the unwavering support of my husband and four sons, and the cherished gift of Dick Dowling's mentoring and friendship.

Thanks to Dick's unparalleled vision, integrity, and ingenuity, the Church holds a vital and highly-respected place in the public square of Annapolis. My colleagues at the Conference and I look forward to carrying on that legacy, and to continuing to share the hope and inspiration that the Church's moral vision offers to the pressing issues that face our society. As we move forward, we are richly blessed with the wealth of Dick's example and reputation, the invaluable leadership of our bishops, and the faithful involvement of so many of Maryland's Catholic citizens.

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