

Trump defends rights of faith-based adoption agencies at prayer breakfast

WASHINGTON — Touting efforts to protect religious freedom, President Donald Trump told the National Prayer Breakfast that his administration would defend the right of faith-based adoption agencies to place children in families based on firmly held religious beliefs.

“We will always protect our country’s proud tradition of faith-based adoption,” Trump said. “My administration is working to ensure that faith-based adoption agencies are able to help vulnerable children find their forever families while following their deeply held beliefs.”

His comments came after introducing Melissa and Chad Buck, a Catholic couple from Holt, Michigan, who have adopted five children with special needs through St. Vincent Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Lansing. Two of the Holts’ children — Max, 10, and Liz, 9 — joined the couple at the Feb. 7 breakfast.

Trump alluded to an American Civil Liberties Union federal lawsuit against the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services that challenges a state law that protects child-placing agencies that deny adoption services because of a conflict with the agency’s religious beliefs.

The lawsuit argues that state-contracted, taxpayer-funded child placement agencies unconstitutionally discriminate by disqualifying same-sex couples from consideration for adoption or foster care.

Under Catholic teaching, St. Vincent Catholic Charities does not place children with same-sex couples. It is among the agencies contracted for adoption services by the state of Michigan.

The president also told the breakfast audience his administration is “speaking out against religious persecution around the world including against religious

minorities, Christians and the Jewish community.”

Trump then introduced Elan Carr, a former prosecutor in the Los Angeles district attorney’s office, as the State Department’s new special envoy to monitor and combat anti-Semitism.

Applauding throughout the breakfast, the audience reserved its longest ovation for Trump’s pledge to uphold its pro-life policies toward unborn children.

“As part of our commitment to building a just and loving society, we must build a culture that cherishes the dignity and sanctity of innocent human life. All children, born and unborn, are made in the holy image of God,” he said.

Trump pledged to continue efforts to crack down on human trafficking by working with faith-based agencies working on the frontline to protect vulnerable men, women and children.

“Together we will end the scourge of modern-day slavery, which because of the internet is at levels nobody can believe, the president added.

In closing, Trump said Americans were “blessed to live in a land of faith where all things are possible” and where “our only limits are those we place on ourselves.”

“So today and every day, let us pray for the future of our country,” he said. “Let us pray for the courage to pursue justice and the wisdom to forge peace. Let us pray for a future where every child has a warm, safe and loving home.

“Let us pray therefore for the good our out people, for the strength of our families for the safety of our citizens, for the fulfillment of our deepest hopes and our highest potential. And let us always give thanks of the miracle of life, the majesty of creation and the grace of almighty God.”