

LIFE DOES NOT END AT BIRTH

Catholics Called to Vote for the Common Good

“Our moral, political and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth. Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life for the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker ... consistency means that we can't have it both ways.”

- Cardinal Joseph Bernardin

The following is a non-partisan statement originally issued in 2004 and endorsed by more than 200 Catholic organizations, now updated in September 2008. It was inspired by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Faithful Citizenship" statement.

It is a common misperception of politicians seeking office that the Catholic vote can be courted by addressing a narrow range of issues. In reality, the great majority of Catholics in the U.S., in agreement with the U.S. Catholic Bishops, understand and recognize that “the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience,” and that “the Church is involved in the political process but is not partisan.” (*Faithful Citizenship*, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2007).

Members of the media - and indeed a few of our own religious leaders - do a great disservice to our church and nation when they attempt to use one or another issue as the benchmark for Catholic identity.

“The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility toward the common good” (*Doctrinal Note on Some Questions*



- **OVER 16,000 CHILDREN DIE EVERY DAY-1 EVERY 5 SECONDS-DUE TO HUNGER-RELATED CAUSES**
- **NEARLY 5,000 U.S. SOLDIERS AND BETWEEN 85,000 AND 700,000 IRAQI CIVILIANS HAVE DIED IN AN IRAQ WAR CALLED “A MORAL FAILURE” BY THE VATICAN**
- **45.7 MILLION U.S. CITIZENS DID NOT HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE LAST YEAR**
- **9.4 MILLION U.S. WORKERS ARE UNEMPLOYED (AUGUST 2008)**

Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life,” Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, November 24, 2002 and approved by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II).

The Catholic Church teaches that all life is sacred. A candidate for office must understand that the Church stands against any policy or course of action which diminishes life, dignity or the rights of the human person: abortion, capital punishment, war, scandalous poverty, denial of healthcare, mistreatment of immigrants and racism, to name but a few.

There are 60 million Catholics in the U.S. We take the responsibility of voting seriously. Each of us will evaluate candidates based on what our conscience – formed by reading the signs of the times in light of the example of Jesus in the Scriptures and the teachings of our Church throughout the ages – demands. We will examine the broad range of issues, remembering that “our cause is the defense of human life and dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable” (*Faithful Citizenship*, U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2007).

IN 2004, THIS STATEMENT APPEARED AS AN ADVERTISEMENT IN OVER 30 NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, FROM SPOKANE, WASHINGTON TO PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA; ATLANTA, GEORGIA TO DENVER, COLORADO. THE “LIFE DOES NOT END AT BIRTH” CAMPAIGN WAS FEATURED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE AND DOZENS OF OTHER MEDIA OUTLETS AROUND THE NATION. TO RUN THIS AD IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER, PLEASE CONTACT US AT INFO@PAXCHRISTIOUSA.ORG. PLEASE INCLUDE “LIFE DOES NOT END AT BIRTH” IN YOUR “SUBJECT” LINE.

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