

FAITH & POLITICS



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING PRINCIPLES

1. The Life and Dignity of the Human Person.

Each public policy must be evaluated in light of its impact on human life and dignity.

2. Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Human dignity and the ability to fulfill our responsibilities require that human rights be respected.

3. A Call to Family and Community.

The human person is not only sacred, but also social. We exercise our rights and fulfill our responsibilities in community, the most basic of which is the family.

4. The Dignity of Work, the Rights of Workers.

Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a vocation, a participation in creation. Basic rights of workers must be protected.

5. The Option for the Poor.

Poor and vulnerable persons have a special place in church teaching. We need to put the needs of people who are poor first.

6. Solidarity.

We are one human family despite differences of race, creed, or nationality. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions.

7. Care for God's Creation.

We are called to protect people and the planet, living our Faith in relationship with all of God's creation.

POPE BENEDICT XVI ON THE ROLE OF THE LAITY

"The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation *in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good*. The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility."

Excerpts from *Deus Caritas Est*, # 28 & 29

RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON

"Bringing a respect for human dignity to practical politics can be a daunting task. There is such a wide spectrum of issues involving the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity. Good people frequently disagree on which problems to address, which policies to adopt and how best to apply them. But for citizens and elected officials alike, the basic principle is simple: *We must begin with a commitment never to intentionally kill, or collude in the killing, of any innocent human life, no matter how broken, unformed, disabled or desperate that life may seem...*"

"Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. Therefore, Catholics should eagerly involve themselves as advocates for the weak and marginalized in all these areas. Catholic public officials are obliged to address each of these issues as they seek to build consistent policies which promote respect for the human person at all stages of life. *But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life*. Indeed, the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community."

Living the Gospel of Life:
A Challenge to American Catholics
1998 USCCB Statement.

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INTEGRAL UNITY

"Our faith has an integral unity that calls Catholics to defend human life and human dignity whenever they are threatened. A priority for the poor, the protection of family life, the pursuit of justice and the promotion of peace are fundamental priorities of the Catholic moral tradition, which cannot be ignored or neglected. We encourage and will continue to work with those in both parties who seek to act on these essential principles in defense of the poor and vulnerable."

Responsibilities of Catholics in Public Life
USCCB, March 10, 2006.

CHOOSE ACCORDING TO PRINCIPLE

"We urge our fellow citizens to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest. As bishops, we seek to form the consciences of our people. We do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address issues in the political arena."

Faithful Citizenship:
A Call to Political Responsibility
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2003

THE COMMON GOOD

"A well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. 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 towards the common good..."

In the face of fundamental and inalienable ethical demands, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person.

Doctrinal Note, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican, 2002

NON-PARTISAN

"We [the Church] cannot endorse parties or candidates. This would be theologically and pastorally unwise and could be politically counter-productive. We must speak the truth, but we must not allow ourselves to become used in partisan politics either by those who dispute our teaching on life and dignity or those who reduce our teaching to a particular issue or partisan cause..."

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

LIFE FIRST & THINGS WHICH MAKE LIFE TRULY HUMAN

"The life and dignity of the human person is fundamental. Without the right to life, no other rights are possible. So we will not compromise on life, but we will not stop there. Jesus came so that we might "have life and have it more abundantly." We believe every human person has a fundamental right to life. All issues are clearly not of equal moral worth— life comes first. But as the Doctrinal Note makes clear, those things which make life truly human – faith and family, education and work, housing and health care – demand our attention and action as well..."

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
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MORAL CONSIDERATIONS IN VOTING CHOICES

"It is important to note that Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] makes a clear distinction between public officials and voters, explaining that a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil only if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate's permissive stand on abortion. However, when a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted if there are proportionate reasons."

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
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