



ABORTION

Abortion has become a preeminent threat to human life and dignity because it directly attacks life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all others. Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed.

In Ohio there is a prohibition on using public monies to support abortions. Ohio also requires parental consent prior to abortion for minors and informed consent for adults. Ohio recently passed laws requiring licensure of abortion clinics, non-coercion protocols, and client access to ultrasound results in clinics.

DEATH PENALTY

Ohio's increasing reliance on the death penalty cannot be justified. Since there are other ways to protect society that are more respectful of human life, our Church supports efforts to end the use of the death penalty and, in the meantime, to restrain its use through broader use of DNA evidence, access to effective counsel, and efforts to address unfairness and injustice related to application of the death penalty.

Ohio has nearly 170 men and 2 women on death row. Ohio has executed thirty-five persons in the past eleven years. One execution each month is now the norm for Ohio.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

We believe that a just economy is one that serves the human person. Questions of fair wages, fair taxation, fair treatment of workers and fair business practices are important public policy debates. The State Budget is an expression of moral priorities. This budget should adequately fund health and safety, education and human services, economic development and environmental security. The needs of the poor and vulnerable should be a high priority.

We support tax policies that fairly raise adequate revenues, and mitigate the impact on persons with fixed and low incomes. We believe wages should be adequate for workers to provide for themselves and their families with dignity.

EDUCATION

Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination.

Over the years, the Ohio General Assembly and Ohio's Governors have provided tax-supported assistance for pupils attending Catholic and other chartered nonpublic schools. Ohio's elected officials have allocated funds for resources such as textbooks, tutoring, bus transportation, counseling and psychological services, administrative support, computer hardware and software, and teacher training. The Ohio EdChoice Scholarship Program, Cleveland Scholarship and Tutoring Program, and Autism Scholarship Program help make Catholic school education possible for families and students.

ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

At its core, global climate change is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both the human environment and the natural environment. It is about stewardship of God's creation and our responsibility to those who come after us.

There is a growing agreement among scientists that global warming is real. Many experts predict that millions of people (mostly poor people) will be subjected to deadly droughts, floods, heat waves and extreme weather events such as tropical storms and hurricanes. In addition, a dramatically altered climate will impact generations yet to be born. Our actions today could reduce or increase this future risk.

EUTHANASIA & ASSISTED SUICIDE

Euthanasia is a direct action or omission of an action that is *intended* to cause death and so eliminate suffering. *Assisted Suicide* occurs when a physician, family member or some other person aids one in a voluntary decision for death and helps carry out these explicit wishes at the behest of the person who is choosing death.

Concern for the inalienable and inherent dignity of each person, especially the most vulnerable members of society, is the foundation of our opposition to the legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

There is a substantive moral difference between foregoing treatment (thereby allowing one to die naturally from an underlying pathology), and an action that of itself or by intention causes death.

Compassion for people in pain and suffering is better expressed by appropriate pain management, intelligent use of stated ethical principles regarding life-sustaining medical treatment and use of advance directives relating to health care decisions.

GAMBLING

Games and schemes of chance are not in themselves inherently wrong. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his or her needs and those of others.

Experience indicates that a variety of social ills are associated with casino gambling and slot machines. These include a tendency to promote addictive gambling, familial irresponsibility, alcohol and/or substance abuse, and organized crime.

Bingo should be viewed as distinct from casino gambling. Bingo games in Ohio use the net proceeds for charitable purposes. Thousands of volunteers donate their time to staff such “lower stakes” charitable fundraising.

HEALTH CARE

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. More than 47 million Americans lack health care coverage. Genuine health care reform must protect the life, dignity, consciences and health of all, especially the poor and vulnerable.

Each year, Catholic hospital systems in Ohio provide more than \$400 million in charity care and community benefits. Local health care transformation continues to occur through promotion of health and wellness programs, chronic disease initiatives, expansion of information technology, and other care innovations.

Concerns remain over cost effective utilization of Medicaid, adequate provider reimbursement for government health programs, and growing medical costs.

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

Shelter is one of the basic rights of the human person. Approximately 150,000 Ohioans are homeless. Nearly one in four Ohioans cannot afford the fair-market rent of a two-bedroom unit and foreclosures continued to be higher than the national average.

We support efforts to remove the cap on the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships. We continue to oppose unjust housing discrimination.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Human trafficking is a modern-day form of slavery. Victims of human trafficking are subjected to force, fraud, or coercion, for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor.

Approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year; about fifteen thousand of them are in the United States. A report by the *Ohio Trafficking in Persons Study Commission* found that over one thousand children are trafficked in Ohio each year, while several thousand more are considered to be at risk.

HUNGER

Food, like life itself, is a basic human right. The rising costs of food, fuel and medicine coupled with high unemployment have led to increased hunger here and abroad.

Ohio food banks, pantries and emergency feeding programs are experiencing an overall shortage in food resources due to higher demand and declining donations. In any given week, over 200,000 different Ohioans receive emergency food assistance. More than forty percent of persons in food lines across the state are the *working poor*. Throughout the world statistics show that 35,000 persons die of hunger and its consequences every day.

IMMIGRANTS

The Gospel calls us to welcome immigrants with compassion and hopeful expectation. “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” (Matt. 25:35). Ohio has a large number of Hispanic immigrant workers recruited by businesses to labor year round in Ohio industries. Many are undocumented.

We believe that current federal immigration law is unjust, unnecessarily restrictive and fails to properly balance the rights of immigrant workers and their families with the state’s right to control its borders. We support comprehensive reforms at the national level.

Ohio should show judicious restraint in pursuing state enforcement legislation while important debate over changes in the law continues at the federal level. Proposed state legislation declaring English as the official language is unnecessary and void of additional resources to help immigrants learn English.

MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE

We believe that the family is the basic cell of human society. Marriage ought to be protected as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman and our laws should reflect this principle. Policies related to the definition of marriage, taxes, the workplace, divorce, and welfare should be designed to help families stay together and to reward responsibility and sacrifice for children.

PEACE

The Church is called to be an instrument of peace in the world. Peace is both a gift of God and a human work.

The Christian tradition possesses two ways to address conflict: non-violence and just war. Non-violence consists of a commitment to resist injustice and public evil, with means other than force. The just war tradition begins with a strong presumption against the use of force and then establishes the conditions when this presumption may be overcome for the sake of preserving the kind of peace that protects human dignity and human rights.

Lethal force may be used only if all of the following criteria are met. *Just cause* – the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations is lasting, grave and certain. *Legitimate authority* - only legitimate public authority may use deadly force or wage war. *Comparative justice* – the injustice suffered by one party must significantly outweigh that suffered by the other. *Right intention* – force may be used only in a truly just cause and solely for that purpose. *Probability of success* – arms may not be used in a futile cause or in a case where disproportionate measures are required to achieve success. *Proportionately* – the use of arms may not produce disorders greater than the evils to be eliminated. *Last resort* – force may be used only after all peaceful alternatives have been exhausted. The conduct of hostilities once initiated must be evaluated constantly to ensure non-combatant immunity, no disproportionate collateral damage to civilian life or property and the continuing intention to restore peace with justice.

The U.S. Bishops raised concerns about whether the war in Iraq meets such criteria. The Bishops have urged a responsible transition in Iraq that will ensure local control, freedom and peace in the country.

The Church has been an advocate for diplomatic and multinational remedies to conflicts in the Middle East and Africa. The Church has condemned the arms trade and the use of antipersonnel landmines that continue killing even after hostilities have stopped.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The Catholic Conference of Ohio is committed to working for greater justice and inclusion for people who live with physical, intellectual, sensory and emotional disabilities.

We call upon people of good will to reexamine their attitudes toward people with disabilities and promote their well-being and integration into the Christian community and society. We urge the defense of the right to life and other rights for people with disabilities including the right to equal opportunity in education, in employment, in housing, and in health care, as well as the right to free access to public accommodations, facilities and services.

Ohio recently passed an autism special education scholarship that can be utilized at chartered non-public schools and with other private providers.

POVERTY

Poverty and racism continue to undermine our nation's most basic promise of liberty and justice for all. More than one million Ohioans (13%) are impoverished. One in six children live in poverty. The majority of Ohio families living in poverty are employed in low paying jobs. These "working poor," especially if they were persons of color, were among the most affected by poverty. African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans are about three times as likely to live in poverty as are Caucasians. Recent studies show that Cleveland, Cincinnati, Toledo and Columbus have some of the highest poverty rates in the nation.

The needs of the poor and vulnerable members of our society must become a high priority within the state budget and throughout public policy. The Catholic Conference of Ohio is a partner in the Catholic Charities USA nationwide campaign to reduce poverty in half by the year 2020.

PRISON MINISTRY & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Catholic Conference of Ohio supports the redirection of public resources towards programs designed to rehabilitate and reintegrate ex-offenders back into society. Government should prioritize the funding of programs aimed at crime prevention, rehabilitation, education, substance abuse treatment, probation, parole, and reintegration.

Each diocese in Ohio has a coordinator for prison ministry. Many persons- priests, deacons, women religious and lay volunteers- provide services to inmates in Ohio state institutions. Many family members of inmates also receive outreach. Increased attention is being given to reentry ministries.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has approved a *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. In the charter the bishops have promised to reach out to those who have been sexually abused as minors by anyone serving the Church in ministry, employment, or a volunteer position, whether the sexual abuse was recent or occurred many years ago.

The pastoral and spiritual care and emotional well being of those who have been sexually abused and of their families is of the highest priority. The bishops are working with parents, civil authorities, educators, and various organizations in the community to make and maintain the safest environment for minors. In the same way, the bishops are evaluating the background of seminary applicants as well as all church personnel who have responsibility for the care and supervision of children and young people.

RACISM

The heart of the race question is moral and religious. The existence of racial intolerance, discrimination, and privilege is absolutely irreconcilable with Christian faith and belief. Racism fractures the unity of the human family, violates the human rights of individuals and groups, and mocks the God-given equal dignity of human beings. Poverty and racial injustice are the results of human agency.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and Catholic Charities USA are calling upon Catholics and all people of good will to confront racial injustice and inequality. A renewed commitment to racial justice is needed, especially in the areas of housing, education, employment, immigration, criminal justice, and public assistance.

RURAL LIFE & LAND USE

A just agricultural system should promote food security and food safety. Justice also demands stewardship of the land and resources used in agricultural production and attention to the dignity and fair treatment of all who work in the system.

Ohio voters recently passed a constitutional amendment authorizing the creation of a *Livestock Standards Board* to prescribe standards for animal care and well-being. The standards are intended to maintain food safety, encourage locally grown and raised food, and protect Ohio farms and families.

We continue to support state policies and reforms that promote farmland preservation, environmental protection, and the enhancement of rural communities and family farms.

STEM CELL RESEARCH & CLONING

The Catholic Church supports ethically responsible stem cell research, while opposing any research that exploits or destroys human embryos. The Catholic Church has long supported research using stem cells from adult tissue and umbilical cord blood, which poses no moral problem. Many of these cells are already being used to treat people with a wide variety of diseases.

Cloning is a depersonalized way to reproduce in which human beings are manufactured in the laboratory to preset specifications. It is not a worthy way to bring a new human being into the world. When done for stem cell research, it involves the moral wrong of destroying an innocent human life for possible benefit to others, plus an additional wrong: it creates human beings solely in order to kill them for their cells. This is the ultimate reduction of a fellow human being to a mere means, to an instrument of other people's wishes.

SENIOR CITIZEN CARE

We believe that honoring older people involves welcoming them, helping them and making good use of their gifts, talents and experience. A fully human civilization shows respect, love and care for the elderly.

We support legislation that will expand the assisted living program, adequately fund the PASSPORT program, maintain quality nursing homes, provide affordable health care, and maintain supportive services such as food and transportation.

VIOLENCE

Families are torn by violence. Communities are destroyed by violence. Faith is tested by violence. Violence in any form"—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal"—is sinful. Society cannot tolerate an ethic that uses violence to make a point, settle grievances or get what we want. The path to a more peaceful future is found in a rediscovery of personal responsibility, respect for human life and human dignity, and a recommitment to social justice.

Domestic violence, child abuse, abortion, terrorism, gun violence and war are several issues that must be addressed.



Catholic Conference of Ohio
9 E Long St. Columbus, Ohio 43215
614-224-7147
www.ohiocathconf.org