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**STATEMENT ON ABORTION AND POLITICAL LIFE  
BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF OHIO  
December 29, 1989**

We Catholic bishops of Ohio are making this statement about abortion and political life in response to the questions and expectations which have been addressed to us in the last few weeks.

The willful destruction of innocent human life, born or unborn, is a social evil of the greatest magnitude. Any society which finds it acceptable for a parent to destroy an unborn child or which provides for such destruction by public funding has sown the seeds of its own destruction. If a defenseless unborn child is dependent for survival on the forbearance of another or on the ability to survive independently from his or her mother, then human life has become cheap indeed and we are all vulnerable. This is our Catholic belief, but it is also a conviction shared by many of other faiths or of no religious faith at all.

Some Catholics choose to sidestep the difficult questions connected with abortion in our society. They claim to accept Catholic teaching on this matter while refusing to carry out its implications for society on the grounds that to do so would impose their religious beliefs on others. Yet what is at issue here is not some narrow sectarian opinion. What is at issue is a basic moral conviction about human life and human society. Indeed, the founders of our nation saw the right to life as inalienable, as incapable of being denied or abridged by any human authority precisely because that right is bestowed equally on all of us by our Creator. To claim that such religious and moral principles should not influence public life is to abandon the authentic common good to the shifting winds of public opinion or to pursue consensus at any price. It is also to raise questions about the integrity and sincerity with which such religious and moral principles are really held.

In an earlier day, religious and moral principles led us to confront the issues of slavery and civil rights for minorities. In our day, are they to be excluded as we confront such issues as housing for the poor, access to health care, and equal treatment for the handicapped?

We cannot judge the state of anyone's conscience before God. We control no votes except the ones we cast personally. We are open to appropriate dialogue on the issue. But it is clear to us that, objectively speaking, the tolerance of abortion in our society and the refusal to allow religious and moral principles to influence public life are positions which are both morally and socially wrong.