



Faithful Citizenship 2008

Fourth in a Series

Right to Life & Dignity of the Human Person

“Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed.”

Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World) 27, as cited in Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life) 3

Catholic Social Doctrine

“Human life is sacred. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable.”

(Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship (FCFC) 40)

Each human person is created in God’s image and, without exception, has dignity, worth, and value that must be protected and respected from conception until death.

As Catholics, we are called to defend the lives of our brothers and sisters, particularly those members of our human family who are unable to defend themselves. In protecting human life, we must first “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.” *(Living the Gospel of Life 21)*

This commitment to build a “culture of life” is one that is lived out in our everyday witness to the value of human life. We must live it consistently, vigorously, and publicly.

This “consistent ethic of life” is a compass that keeps one’s devotion to the value of life from being blown off course by the winds of self-interest or the undertow of other values. The consistent ethic of life does not mean all issues are equal, but rather that all our choices should affirm the life and dignity of all human beings.

As our founders affirmed in the Declaration of Independence, life is the foundational right, listed before liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And because governments are instituted to secure these rights, it is critical for Catholics to discern a candidate’s commitment to the value of all human life and to policies that affirm and protect it.

Key Issues

Because every person is created in the image and likeness of God, we seek to defend human life in all its stages and in every condition. Therefore we call on you to:

- Oppose **abortion, physician assisted suicide, and euthanasia**, which are

preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself.

- Reject scientific research that threatens to pit the weak and the suffering in our midst against each other. Oppose **embryonic stem cell research** and **human cloning** because it destroys human life at its earliest and most tender stage.
- Promote **peace** and avoid **war**. Nations have a right and obligation to defend themselves against terrorism and other threats, but military force should be a last resort and never be indiscriminate or disproportionate. The bishops have raised serious moral concerns and questions about **preemptive or preventive use of force**.
- Oppose the use of torture.
- Support a “**responsible transition**” in **Iraq** that reallocates resources from war to the urgent needs of the poor.
- Reverse the spread of **nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons** and reduce U.S. reliance on weapons of mass destruction by pursuing progressive nuclear

disarmament. End U.S. use of anti-personnel landmines and reduce its predominant role in the global arms trade.

- Oppose any efforts to reinstate the **death penalty** in Wisconsin. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.” (2267)
- Support funding for programs that care for the **aging**, those with **disabilities**, and the **dying**.
- Endorse programs that promote **adoption** and assist **pregnant women**.
- Protect the rights of workers and institutions to object in **conscience** to certain activities, particularly in the health care arena where the moral objections relate to fundamental questions of life and death.

Resources

Evangelium vitae (The Gospel of Life), Pope John Paul II, 1995

Gaudium et spes (The Church in the Modern World), 1965

Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life, USCCB, 2001

The Catholic Campaign to End the Death Penalty, USCCB, 2005

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

Faithful for Life: A Moral Reflection, USCCB, 1995

A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on the Death Penalty, WCC, 2006

The Consistent Ethic of Life: A Demand of Discipleship, WCC, 1997

Resources available on the web:
Go to www.wisconsinatholic.org
Click on “Elections 2008”