CATHOLICS AND THE LIFE ISSUES

The <u>consistent ethic of life</u> provides a moral framework for principled Catholic engagement in political life and, rightly understood, neither treats all issues as morally equivalent nor reduces Catholic teaching to one or two issues. <u>It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God.</u> It unites us as a "people of life and for life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 6) pledged to build what Pope John Paul II called a "culture of life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 77). This culture of life begins with the preeminent obligation to protect innocent life from direct attack and extends to defending life whenever it is threatened or diminished. (Faithful Citizenship, #40)

Catholic voters should use the framework of Catholic teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues affecting human life and dignity as well as issues of justice and peace, and they should consider candidates' integrity, philosophy, and performance. It is important for all 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. (Faithful Citizenship, 41)

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Made in the image and likeness of God, all persons are sacred. Belief in the sanctity of human life and inherent dignity of each person is the foundation of all of our social teachings. Today this value is threatened by abortion, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, and the many ways in which people are treated with disregard for their human dignity.

We believe that every person is precious, that people are more important than things, and that the measure of every institution is whether it threatens or enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

"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, at any stage or in any condition. In our society, human life is especially under direct attack from abortion. Other direct threats to the sanctity of human life include euthanasia, human cloning, and the destruction of human embryos for research." (Faithful Citizenship, #44)

From the Catholic Catechism

Abortion

2270 Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

> Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.

2273 The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a *constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation*:

"The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death." (Donum Vitae III)

Cloning and Stem Cell Research

2275 "One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival."[83]

"It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material."

From the Pontifical Academy*:* Human cloning must also be judged negative with regard to the dignity of the person cloned, who enters the world by virtue of being the "copy" (even if only a biological copy) of another being: this practice paves the way to the clone's radical suffering, for his psychic identity is jeopardized by the real or even by the merely virtual presence of his "other".

Euthanasia

2276 Those whose lives are diminished or weakened deserve special respect. Sick or handicapped persons should be helped to lead lives as normal as possible.

2279 Even if death is thought imminent, the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted. The use of painkillers to alleviate the sufferings of the dying, even at the risk of shortening their days, can be morally in conformity with human dignity if death is not willed as either an end or a means, but only foreseen and tolerated as inevitable Palliative care is a special form of disinterested charity. As such it should be encouraged.