



APPLYING CATHOLIC TEACHING TO MAJOR ISSUES: A SUMMARY OF POLICY POSITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

“Politics is about values and issues as well as candidates and officeholders. In this brief summary, we bishops call attention to issues with significant moral dimensions that should be carefully considered in each campaign and as policy decisions are made in the years to come. As the descriptions below indicate, some issues involve principles that can never be violated, such as the fundamental right to life. Others reflect our judgment about the best way to apply Catholic principles to policy issues.” (#63)

Some resources are suggested under each topic. More is available at www.usccb.org.

Human Life

“Our 1998 statement *Living the Gospel of Life* declares, “Abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all others” (no. 5). Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed. Cloning and destruction of human embryos for research or even for potential cures are always wrong. The purposeful taking of human life by assisted suicide and euthanasia is not an act of mercy, but an unjustifiable assault on human life. Genocide, torture, and the direct and intentional targeting of noncombatants in war or terrorist attacks are always wrong.” (#64)

A Matter of the Heart: A Statement on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, 2002 (www.usccb.org/prolife/heart.shtml)

Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life, 2001 (www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml)

Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics, 1998 (www.usccb.org/prolife/gospel.shtml)

Family Life

“The family is the basic cell of human society. The role, responsibilities, and needs of families should be central national priorities. Marriage must be defined, recognized, and protected as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman, and as the source of the next generation and the protective haven for children. Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should help families stay together and should reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. Wages should allow workers to support their families, and public assistance should be available to help poor families to live in dignity. Such assistance should be provided in a manner that promotes eventual financial autonomy.” (#70)

“Children are to be valued, protected, and nurtured. As a Church, we affirm our commitment to the protection and well-being of children in our own institutions and in all of society.” (71)

Issues include education, parents’ rights, social and economic policies, healthcare, housing, media, internet, support of the family, to name a few.

National Directory for Catechesis, 2005 (www.usccb.org/education/ndc/index.shtml)

Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 1998

(www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.shtml)

When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women, 2002 (www.usccb.org/laity/help.shtml)

A Family Perspective in Church and Society, 1998 (www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/family.shtml)

Social Justice

“Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Social and economic policies should foster the creation of jobs for all who can work with decent working conditions and just wages. ... Workers, owners, employers, and unions should work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good.” (#76)

“**Welfare policy** should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families leave poverty through work, training, and assistance with child care, health care, housing, and transportation. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work.” (#77)

“**Faith-based groups** deserve recognition and support, not as a substitute for government, but as responsive, effective partners, especially in the poorest communities and countries.” (#78)

“**Social Security** should provide adequate, continuing, and reliable income in an equitable manner for low- and average-wage workers and their families when these workers retire or become disabled, and for the survivors when a wage-earner dies.” (#79)

“Affordable and accessible **health care** is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. With an estimated 47 million Americans lacking health care coverage, it is also an urgent national priority.” (#80)

“The lack of safe, **affordable housing** requires a renewed commitment to increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships, especially with religious groups and community organizations.” (#81)

“A first priority for **agriculture policy** should be food security for all.” (#82)

“The Gospel mandate to “**welcome the stranger**” requires Catholics to care for and stand with immigrants, both documented and undocumented, including immigrant children.” (#83)

“All persons have a right to receive a **quality education**. Young people, including those who are poor and those with disabilities, need to have the opportunity to develop intellectually, morally, spiritually, and physically, allowing them to become good citizens who make socially and morally responsible decisions.” (#84)

“It is important for our society to continue to **combat discrimination** based on race, religion, sex, ethnicity, disabling condition, or age, as these are grave injustices and affronts to human dignity.” (#86)

“**Care for the earth and for the environment** is a moral issue. Protecting the land, water, and the air we share is a religious duty of stewardship and reflects our responsibility to born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental assault.” (#87)

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, 2003 (www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml)

A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children, 2002 (www.usccb.org/bishops/table.shtml)

Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (Fourth Edition), 2001 (www.usccb.org/bishops/directives.shtml)

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, 2001 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.shtml)

Global Solidarity

“A more just world will likely be a more peaceful world, a world less vulnerable to terrorism and other violence. The United States has the responsibility to take the lead in addressing the scandal of poverty and underdevelopment. Our nation should help to humanize globalization, addressing its negative consequences and spreading its benefits, especially among the world's poor. The United States also has a unique opportunity to use its power in partnership with others to build a more just and peaceful world.” (#88)

A Call to Solidarity with Africa, 2001 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.shtml)

A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness, 1999 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/adminstm.shtml)