POPE BENEDICT XVI
ON THE ROLE OF THE LAITY

“The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good. The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility.”

Excerpts from Deus Caritas Est, # 28 & 29

RESPECT FOR THE HUMAN PERSON

“Bringing a respect for human dignity to practical politics can be a daunting task. There is such a wide spectrum of issues involving the protection of human life and the promotion of human dignity. Good people frequently disagree on which problems to address, which policies to adopt and how best to apply them. But for citizens and elected officials alike, the basic principle is simple: We must 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…”

“Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice. Any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. Therefore, Catholics should eagerly involve themselves as advocates for the weak and marginalized in all these areas. Catholic public officials are obliged to address each of these issues as they seek to build consistent policies which promote respect for the human person at all stages of life. But being ‘right’ in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life. Indeed, the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the ‘rightness’ of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community.”

Living the Gospel of Life:
A Challenge to American Catholics
1998 USCCB Statement.
FAITH & POLITICS

INTEGRAL UNITY

“Our faith has an integral unity that calls Catholics to defend human life and human dignity whenever they are threatened. A priority for the poor, the protection of family life, the pursuit of justice and the promotion of peace are fundamental priorities of the Catholic moral tradition, which cannot be ignored or neglected. We encourage and will continue to work with those in both parties who seek to act on these essential principles in defense of the poor and vulnerable.”

Responsibilities of Catholics in Public Life
USCCB, March 10, 2006.

CHOOSE ACCORDING TO PRINCIPLE

“We urge our fellow 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. As bishops, we seek to form the consciences of our people. We do not wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates. We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on the full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address issues in the political arena.”

Faithful Citizenship:
A Call to Political Responsibility
U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2003

THE COMMON GOOD

“A well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church’s social doctrine does not exhaust one’s responsibility towards the common good...

In the face of fundamental and inalienable ethical demands, Christians must recognize that what is at stake is the essence of the moral law, which concerns the integral good of the human person.”

Doctrinal Note, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican, 2002

NON-PARTISAN

“We [the Church] cannot endorse parties or candidates. This would be theologically and pastorally unwise and could be politically counter-productive. We must speak the truth, but we must not allow ourselves to become used in partisan politics either by those who dispute our teaching on life and dignity or those who reduce our teaching to a particular issue or partisan cause...”

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

LIFE FIRST & THINGS WHICH MAKE LIFE TRULY HUMAN

“The life and dignity of the human person is fundamental. Without the right to life, no other rights are possible. So we will not compromise on life, but we will not stop there. Jesus came so that we might “have life and have it more abundantly.” We believe every human person has a fundamental right to life. All issues are clearly not of equal moral worth—life comes first. But as the Doctrinal Note makes clear, those things which make life truly human—faith and family, education and work, housing and health care—demand our attention and action as well...”

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

MORAL CONSIDERATIONS IN VOTING CHOICES

“It is important to note that Cardinal Ratzinger [Pope Benedict XVI] makes a clear distinction between public officials and voters, explaining that a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil only if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate’s permissive stand on abortion. However, when a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted if there are proportionate reasons.”

Interim Reflections
USCCB Task Force on Catholic Bishops
and Catholic Politicians, June 2004

CATHOLIC CONFERENCE OF OHIO
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ABORTION
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 a law requiring licensure of abortion clinics.

Where does the candidate stand on protecting unborn children?

DEATH PENALTY
Ohio has close to 200 men and 2 women on death row. Ohio has executed twenty-two persons in the past eight years. Legislation has been introduced to establish a study commission regarding Ohio’s death penalty.

Where does the candidate stand on the death penalty and a moratorium on executions in Ohio?

EDUCATION
The Ohio General Assembly has been very responsive in the past to providing assistance for pupils attending chartered non-public schools. Funding has been provided in such areas as school transportation, administrative support, textbooks, computers and teacher training. The recent expansion of voucher programs has been helpful.

Where does the candidate stand on the rights of parents to choose the educational setting for their children and the state’s obligation to provide the means to exercise that right?

EUTHANASIA & ASSISTED SUICIDE
Concern for the dignity of each person - especially the most vulnerable members of society - is the foundation of our opposition to the legalization of euthanasia and/or assisted suicide. There is a substantive moral difference between foregoing treatment (thereby allowing one to die naturally from an underlying pathology), and an action which of itself or by intention causes death.

Where does the candidate stand on euthanasia and assisted suicide?

FAMILY LIFE
Ohio recently passed a constitutional amendment prohibiting the legalization of same-sex unions. 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.

Where does the candidate stand on protecting and strengthening family life?

HEALTH CARE
The issue of affordable prescription drugs and medical inflation remains ongoing concerns. Ohio’s legislature reduced health care coverage through Medicaid to working families in the last budget. There is fear among advocates that such coverage may continue to be given less political priority.

Where does the candidate stand on affordable prescription drugs, and health care coverage for impoverished children and families?

IMMIGRANTS
Ohio has a growing number of Hispanic immigrant workers recruited by businesses to labor year round in industries such as food processing plants, plastic factories, lumber mills, and landscape nurseries. Many immigrants are undocumented and Catholic. U.S. Congress is currently debating varying approaches to this issue.

Where does the candidate stand on support for immigrants, both documented and undocumented? Does the candidate support comprehensive reforms at the national level?

POOR AND HOMELESS
More than one million Ohioans (13%) are impoverished. One in six children live in poverty. More than forty percent of persons in food lines across the state are the working poor. Recent studies show that Cleveland has the highest poverty rate in the nation. Other Ohio cities have shown an increase in poverty.

Where does the candidate stand on providing assistance and services to the poor and vulnerable members of our society?

RURAL LIFE & FOOD PRODUCTION
Food, like life itself, is a basic human right. 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.

Where does the candidate stand on farmland preservation, environmental protection, and enhancing 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.

Where does the candidate stand on the issues of human cloning and embryonic stem cell research?

TAX REFORM
Taxation is both an economic and moral issue. The Ohio Bishops support tax reform that is fair, raises adequate revenues, is progressive, and mitigates the impact on persons with fixed and low incomes.

Where does the candidate stand on Ohio tax reform? Would the candidate support an Ohio refundable earned income tax credit for low-income workers?