

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP SERIES - 1

"**W**e are now witnessing the gradual restructuring of American culture according to ideals of utility, productivity and cost-effectiveness. It is a culture where moral questions are submerged by a river of goods and services and where the misuse of marketing and public relations subverts public life...The losers in this ethical sea change will be those who are elderly, poor, disabled and politically marginalized. None of these pass the utility test; and yet, they at least have a presence. They at least have the possibility of organizing to be heard. *Those who are unborn, infirm and terminally ill have no such advantage. They have no "utility," and worse, they have no voice*" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 3-4).

"**A**s we tinker with the beginning, the end and even the intimate cell structure of life, we tinker with our own identity as a free nation dedicated to the dignity of the human person. When American political life becomes an experiment on people rather than for and by them, it will no longer be worth conducting. We are arguably moving closer to that day. Today, when the inviolable rights of the human person are proclaimed and the value of life publicly affirmed, the most basic human right, 'the right to life, is being denied or trampled upon, especially at the more significant moments of existence: the moment of birth and the moment of death' (Pope John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life* [Evangelium Vitae], 18)" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n.4).

"**R**espect for the dignity of the human person demands a commitment to human rights across a broad spectrum...Yet abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others. They are committed against those who are weakest and most defenseless, those who are genuinely 'the poorest of the poor'" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 5).

"**E**very Catholic is a missionary of the Good News of human dignity redeemed through the cross. While our personal vocation may determine the form and style of our witness, Jesus calls each of us to be a leaven in society, and we will be judged by our actions. No one, least of all someone who exercises leadership in society, can rightfully claim to share fully and practically the Catholic faith and yet act publicly in a way contrary to that faith" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n.7).

"**I**n a striking way, we see today a heightening of the tension between our nation's founding principles and political reality. We see this in diminishing respect for the inalienable right to life and in the elimination of legal protections for those who are most vulnerable. There can be no genuine justice in our society until the truths on which our nation was founded are more perfectly realized in our culture and law" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 14).