



"**S**ome Catholic elected officials have adopted the argument that, while they personally oppose evils like abortion, they cannot force their religious views onto the wider society. This is seriously mistaken on several key counts. First, regarding abortion, the point when human life begins is not a religious belief but a scientific fact -- a fact on which there is clear agreement even among leading abortion advocates. Second, the sanctity of human life is not merely Catholic doctrine but part of humanity's global ethical heritage, and our nation's founding principle. Finally, democracy is not served by silence. Most Americans would recognize the contradiction in the statement, "While I am personally opposed to slavery or racism or sexism I cannot force my personal view on the rest of society." *Real pluralism depends on people of conviction struggling vigorously to advance their beliefs by every ethical and legal means at their disposal*" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 24).

"**A**merican Catholics have long sought to assimilate into U.S. cultural life. But in assimilating, we have too often been digested. We have been changed by our culture too much, and we have changed it not enough. If we are leaven, we must bring to our culture the whole Gospel, which is a Gospel of life and joy. That is our vocation as believers. And there is no better place to start than promoting the beauty and sanctity of human life" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 25).

"**A**s chief teachers in the Church, we must therefore explain, persuade, correct and admonish those in leadership positions who contradict the Gospel of life through their actions and policies. Catholic public officials who disregard Church teaching on the inviolability of the human person indirectly collude in the taking of innocent life" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 29).

"**C**atholics who are privileged to serve in public leadership positions have an obligation to place their faith at the heart of their public service, particularly on issues regarding the sanctity and dignity of human life. Thomas More, the former chancellor of England who preferred to give his life rather than betray his Catholic convictions, went to his execution with the words, 'I die the king's good servant, but God's first'" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 31).

"**I**n an age of artifice, many voters are hungry for substance. They admire and support political figures who speak out sincerely for their moral convictions. For our part we commend Catholic and other public officials who, with courage and determination, use their positions of leadership to promote respect for all human life" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 31).