



"**W**e urge those Catholic officials who choose to depart from Church teaching on the inviolability of human life in their public life to consider the consequences for their own spiritual well being, as well as the scandal they risk by leading others into serious sin. We call on them to reflect on the grave contradiction of assuming public roles and presenting themselves as credible Catholics when their actions on fundamental issues of human life are not in agreement with Church teaching. No public official, especially one claiming to be a faithful and serious Catholic, can responsibly advocate for or actively support direct attacks on innocent human life" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 32).

"**N**o appeal to policy, procedure, majority will or pluralism ever excuses a public official from defending life to the greatest extent possible. As is true of leaders in all walks of life, no political leader can evade accountability for his or her exercise of power (*Evangelium Vitae*, 73-4). Those who justify their inaction on the grounds that abortion is the law of the land need to recognize that there is a higher law, the law of God. No human law can validly contradict the Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 32).

"**T**he Gospel of Life must be proclaimed, and human life defended, in all places and all times. The arena for moral responsibility includes not only the halls of government, but the voting booth as well. Laws that permit abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide are profoundly unjust, and we should work peacefully and tirelessly to oppose and change them. Because they are unjust they cannot bind citizens in conscience, be supported, acquiesced in, or recognized as valid" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 33).

"**W**e encourage *all citizens*, particularly Catholics, to embrace their citizenship not merely as a duty and privilege, but as an opportunity meaningfully to participate *in building the culture of life*. Every voice matters in the public forum. Every vote counts. Every act of responsible citizenship is an exercise of significant individual power. We must exercise that power in ways that defend human life, especially those of God's children who are unborn, disabled or otherwise vulnerable" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 34).

"**W**e get the public officials we deserve. Their virtue -- or lack thereof -- is a judgment not only on them, but on us. Because of this, 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..*" (US Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life*, 1998, n. 34).