

## PLURALISM: The Myths and the Facts



By  
Most Rev. Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.

We live in a society that was once called a “melting pot.” This image implied that many people came to the shores of America and brought rich heritages, but somehow left their uniqueness at the shore and sought to “blend in.” I recall speaking to my mother in the 1970s, at the time that the movie *Roots* made many people consider their unique cultural heritage. The movie, based on the life of a young man who came from Africa, told of the cruelty of slavery, the acts of unfairness, and the hurdles to be overcome. Most of all, the movie told of a richness of culture and heritage that ought not to disappear in America.

When I asked my mother about my Polish and Slovak roots and what her parents had said about life in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, she would always say: “They never really talked about it. It was a place they were leaving, and they were looking for a fresh start.”

This attitude was perhaps understandable at the time — they wanted to focus on their future in a new country, emphasizing what they had in common with other Americans rather than on their distinctive background. But for many, this attitude has come to govern even expression of opinions on the most basic issues and moral principles. The result too often has been to settle for the “least common denominator,” taking away what is clear and unique in our perspectives so all that is left is what everyone already agrees on.

In my mother’s time such an attitude seemed to govern the “public square,” and there were social norms about what should be expressed publicly and what should be expressed privately. The latter category was reserved for religion, in deference to what many thought of as a firm division of church and state.

With the movie *Roots*, and maybe even before this in my life, I began to see that “melting pots” are not always good. In fact, in a melting pot, the multicultural roots get washed and the richness is often lost. Such roots are important sources of the traditions and special customs that make up the richness of our lives from the food we eat on holidays to the way we celebrate holy days. Among the blessings of a deep heritage is the presence of values and moral convictions. I began to see that pluralism, from “*e pluribus unum*” (from many, one), can and should exist within a richness of convictions and moral values.

Some want to reduce all values to matters of faith. And while faith is very important, it is a mistake to lump together deeply held beliefs of a particular faith with moral convictions that go beyond a faith community to reach truths that are written on the hearts of every human person.

### From many, one — *E pluribus unum*

We need only look at the back of any US coin to find the words *e*

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*pluribus unum*. As one of the key principles on which our nation is founded, it announces that we come from many directions and backgrounds to form “...one nation under God, indivisible with liberty and justice for all.” Unity demands work, a commitment to dialogue, and a tolerance for differences. It doesn’t mean, however, that deeply held convictions, especially those related to the common good, should be repressed for fear of offending or because they don’t represent the majority viewpoint. Our convictions should always be presented with civility and compassion, but we also must have the courage to embrace a full and lasting truth upon which the common good will thrive. Our laws and policies should reflect our highest ideals not the lowest common denominator.

Living in a pluralistic society does not mean that we leave our beliefs and strongly held convictions at the border of our country or the doors of our homes. As Archbishop Chaput from Denver recently stated, pluralism is a “demographic fact.” Look around you and you see diversity. He also points out, however, that this fact does not imply that we are “required to mute our convictions.” (C. Chaput, *Render unto Caesar: Serving the Nation by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life*, 2008 p. 145). Cardinal Avery Dulles, a widely recognized wise theologian and counselor of faith and culture, stated it simply and eloquently in a 1990 article (*America*, January 27, 1990): “...the greatest danger facing the Church in our country today is that of an excessive and indiscreet accommodation.”

In 1998, the Catholic Bishops of the U.S. issued a document, *Living the Gospel of Life*, which clearly addressed this danger of an excessive and indiscreet accommodation. Here is a quote from paragraph 25:

Today, Catholics risk cooperating in a false pluralism. Secular society will allow believers to have whatever moral convictions they please — as long as they keep them on the private preserves of their consciences, in their homes and churches, and out of the public arena. Democracy is not a substitute for morality, nor a panacea for immorality. Its value stands — or falls — with the values which it embodies and promotes. Only tireless promotion of the truth about the human person can infuse democracy with the right values. This is what Jesus meant when He asked us to be leaven in society. American 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.

### Confusion on Religion and Politics

Listen to people talk and quickly you will discover confusion when it comes to expressing our convictions of faith in the public square. Some say that the first amendment ought to keep religion out of public discourse. In fact, the first amendment was designed to ensure that no one religion is enshrined as the public religion, and this is a great good. This is called the establishment clause. Thus, simply saying that my religion or some other religion says so is not enough in the public square.

The other half of the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment is the free exercise clause, which ensures that we can express our convictions freely and are limited only by the demands of the common good. The classic exam-

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ple in the area of free speech is the prohibition against falsely screaming “fire” in a public space and causing panic and a stampede.

In his book *Render Unto Caesar*, Archbishop Chaput identifies two mistaken directions. The first leads to a kind of fatalism. We treat our faith as a purely private relationship with God. We have no final home here on earth. We are just passing through. This attitude of a purely private faith tends to isolate us and minimize any influence on the law. In effect, it says, I will live in my little world and do what is right without caring about what others do, or ever being accused of imposing on others. Thus, I will live with the laws of the land, even if my faith and my common sense tell me these laws are not just and not for the ultimate good of all.

A classic expression of this private approach to faith is to say that that laws cannot change people; only a conversion of heart can do that. However, just laws help shape a just culture that makes such conversion more likely and more permanent; and unjust laws harm the innocent and make others more insensitive to their needs, making conversion of heart a much longer and difficult path. In the end, Catholic social teaching rightly emphasizes Jesus’ statement that the way we treat our brothers and sisters — one at a time and all at once — is an essential aspect of how we relate to God.

The second fallacy, less common today, sees the world as a subordinate order to the church. Recently Pope Benedict has been clear that the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice,” but at the same time “cannot and must not replace the State.” The Church’s role is “to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28). In making our case to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, we must use our rational gifts to make persuasive arguments for what is right and just and not exclusively rely on religious expressions.

### “I am personally opposed but...”

Sometimes politicians and other public figures proclaim that they may be personally opposed to some grave violation against, say, human life, but do not want to impose their beliefs on others. It is as if living in a pluralistic society means that one must park one’s convictions outside when entering into public life. Archbishop Chaput shares a humorous insight from a married friend who described the dilemma this way: “Acting publicly as if one has no faith conviction is like asking a married man to act publicly as if he is single.” And Archbishop Chaput adds: “He may be able to do so but his marriage will not likely last long.”

During the recent campaign

season, some prominent politicians made remarks about Church teachings that were inaccurate and misleading. Several bishops, including myself, publicly corrected their error. In doing so I took the opportunity to make an important distinction between matters of faith and matters of reason and the common good. We live in a society that hates religious intolerance and rejects the idea of one person imposing his or her belief on another. The pitfall here is that we may end up treating all deeply held convictions as private religious beliefs meant only for those who believe them. The conventional wisdom states: no one is stopping you from practicing your own beliefs, but don’t impose your opinion on others. However, this attitude is dangerous if taken to extremes.

In fact certain teachings are not only faith convictions but also convictions for the good of all. They are based on a vision for humanity and of humanity. Certain convictions and directions are “written on the hearts of every human being.” For instance, that human life begins at conception is a fact of science that can be found in almost any embryology textbook. Moreover, the conviction that each human life must be respected from the beginning is not an article of faith for believers, such as our belief in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Rather it is like the prohibition against stealing or slavery; it is based on natural law, which is written on the heart of every human being and thus binding for all people. Thus, it is not sufficient to say that I agree with this teaching about respect for life as a matter of faith, but I will not impose it on others, any more than I would say that stealing or slavery is a matter of personal faith that cannot be imposed on others.

An additional question that is not always thought through is the effect unjust laws can have on free religious expression. Already in other parts of the world we hear of Church leaders being forced to curtail their religious expression if it does not fit the government’s viewpoint. In American law, “conscience clauses” have traditionally protected citizens from being forced to perform or support acts that their moral convictions prohibit. However, there is an increasing tendency for interest groups to oppose conscience clauses and require all to act in accord with their own narrow vision of what serves the common good.

Federal legislation now being considered, known as the “Freedom of Choice Act,” could well limit our ability to act according to our conscience. It would even endanger protection of conscience rights, by calling into question any law that may “infringe on” or burden individuals’ ready access to abortion. The effort to pass legislation such as this belies our assumption that we are and shall always remain free to practice our beliefs. While we all recognize that there are reasonable limitations to our freedoms, the key word is “reasonable.”

It is for this reason that the Catholic Confer-

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## Parish Health Ministry Thrives at St. Leo Parish in Versailles

In "Health Care is a Moral Right" Kentucky's bishops wrote the following: "We encourage, wherever possible, that parishes establish Health and Wellness Ministries to assist parishioners and their families to take responsibility for their own health by providing educational opportunities, by promoting skills for communicating with health care providers, and by providing opportunities for health care monitoring such as blood pressure screening."

The Catholic Conference received a \$5,000 grant from the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky to help parishes develop health and wellness ministries that both promotes the health of parishioners and invites all those involved to become advocates for health care that is affordable and accessible to all. This is the first of several articles that will highlight good things happening in parishes where this ministry is already ongoing.

Jesus was known as a great healer of body and spirit. This ministry continues on in each parish today in many ways. Our 600 family Saint Leo Parish in Versailles, Kentucky, has been blessed with a Parish Health Ministry for over a decade. Here are some of the ways in which the healing ministry of Christ is continued through that ministry.

Every other month, members of the Health Ministry Team conduct blood pressure screenings after each weekend Mass. Through this service, several parishioners have been alerted to their need for treatment, and, very probably, their lives have been saved.

Three years ago, based on a practice we discovered at Church of the Epiphany in Louisville, our Parish Health Ministry began a Healing Blanket ministry. They purchase inexpensive fleece blankets and have parish school students or other parishioners sew a heart and a comforting prayer on each blanket. Booklets with Prayers for Healing accompany each blanket. Parishioners pray over the blankets in blessing. Team members then see that blankets given to parishioners free of charge if they are experiencing a potentially life-threatening illness. The names of individuals who have received blankets are written in our Parish Book of Prayer, and the parish prays for them at each Sunday Mass. Several blanket recipients have stated that they found the blankets very comforting. They were very pleased that the parish would be praying for them. Many have taken their blankets along to chemo and radiation therapy appointments. Several have requested that the blankets be buried with them.

The Parish Health Ministry also makes Care Notes, a large variety of informational/inspirational pamphlets, available to parishion-

ers free of charge in the gathering area of the church. Topics of these booklets include (but are not limited to) grief, suicide, teenage years, and depression. Many titles are made available in both Spanish and English. The Ministry also makes DVDs and books on these topics available for loan.

The Parish Health Ministry is a resource for the Joyful Hearts Club, a caregivers' support group at Saint Leo's. This group meets monthly, facilitated by a psychologist. In this faith-based support group, caregivers have the opportunity to get away from home to meet and share with others in similar circumstances.

Finally, the Parish Health Ministry assists with the parish's "Remembering our Dead" service each November. Members provide refreshments and personal support to those who come to pray for their deceased loved ones, especially those who died in the last year. After the service they also offer parishioners free books and pamphlets on the topic of grief.

As the Parish Health Ministry looks to the future, they hope to expand the bereavement ministry in the parish. The first step in this expansion effort will be to establish a "card ministry," periodically sending greeting cards and grief packets (books, Care Notes etc.) to the bereaved. They also plan to have some educational programs in the near future on topics such as Living Wills and Advanced Directives, and Funeral Planning.

The Parish Health Ministry at St. Leo's has been and will continue to be a concrete way of continuing the healing ministry of Christ in space and time. What a blessing it is to so many in our Woodford County parish.

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ence of Kentucky spends a great deal of energy making good cases why a particular law or regulation or judicial decision is or is not "reasonable."

In his book *The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands and Political Realities*, Wake Forest sociology professor David Yamane analyzes various arguments presented by state Catholic conferences in recent years. His findings are interesting and enlightening. Contrary to what might be expected, he found that State Conferences are generally held in high regard, even after the Catholic Church's reduced credibility in the wake of the sexual abuse scandals. He also shows that Catholic conferences make very good use of reason-based and cultural arguments in advocating for their public policy positions.

On the issues of abortion, criminal justice, same sex marriage and economic justice, he found that the arguments against abortion used religious arguments only 21 % of the time, relying on reason or what he calls "civil religious legitimations" in 45.6 % of the rationales, and what we call "natural law" reasoning 33.4 % of the time. Thus, almost 80% of arguments to persuade elected officials to protect the rights of unborn children were not religious in nature. Religious arguments also form less than half the rationale for the issues of economic justice and defense of marriage against redefinitions. His impartial study is a good response to those who say that anything that springs from my faith conviction cannot be rational and must remain private. His study also holds up for praise the fine work

of those who labor throughout the United States in State Catholic Conferences. Our own in Kentucky is deserving of great praise.

### Forming Consciences in a Pluralistic Society

The US Bishops' document, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, issued in November of 2007, has a passage worth repeating and reflecting upon:

Building a world of respect for human life and dignity, where justice and peace prevail, requires more than just political commitments. Individuals, families, businesses, community organizations, and governments all have a role to play. Participation in political life in light of fundamental moral principles is an essential duty for every Catholic and all people of good will.... We cannot compromise basic principles or moral teaching. We are committed to clarity about our moral teaching and to civility. In public life, it is important to practice the virtues of justice and charity that are at the core of our tradition. We should work with others in a variety of ways to advance our moral principles.

In summary, pluralism can only flourish when there is a real commitment to the weakest and most vulnerable among us, to a dialogue about reason and the common good, and to the freedom to live according to our religious beliefs as well as those laws written on the human heart. Without this grounding, we will have a society based upon the least common denominator, and we will be a greatly impoverished nation.



This is the ninth in a series of articles by the CCK Hispanic Committee on the Catholic Campaign for Immigration Reform which aims to reach beyond the networks of the participating national agencies, and to enlist the support of Catholic individuals and institutions in dioceses throughout the country.

Visit [www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org) for more information. Le invitamos a visitar nuestra página con regularidad, debido a que se estará actualizando constantemente con materiales, noticias relevantes y otra información que esperamos sea de su utilidad.

## A Brief Summary of U. S. Immigration History

By Tom Gurucharri



Tom Gurucharri

The United States' history of Immigration begins in the days not too long after the Columbus "discovery" of the Americas. Immigration has always been a controversial subject with each generation of immigrants fearing the effects of the next group of immigrants. The following summary is a bare-bones look at this history, highlights to help us understand our past as the nation debates important immigration policy issues that will affect our future.

### Migration History in the United States

#### Early Migration 1600s – 1800's

After the War of Independence (1775-1783), the movement of large groups of people seeking better economic conditions began creating individual state's concerns to protect their own labor force. When states began taking steps to control the movement of people across political boundaries, the Supreme Court ruled that border control was a federal responsibility. Congress enacted the Immigration Act of 1891, establishing the first Office of Immigration.

#### 1850-1930

The industrial revolution and wars in Europe and Mexico motivated millions to immigrate to the United States. All came to find work, and to flee religious persecution and oppressive governments. Unless an individual showed obvious signs of illness, psychological disorder or had a criminal record, all were admitted, everyone was "legal."

#### 1930 to today

The Great Depression of 1929 in the United States forced a reversal of the immigration pattern. For the first time, more people began leaving than arriving. Then, the effects of World War II altered the pattern again. The ethnic immigration restrictions severely restricted the number of refugees allowed from Germany, perhaps indirectly adding to numbers killed in the Nazi camps. Then later in the Pacific, restrictions against Asian nations virtually stopped all immigration until a reversal of the laws in 1965.

### United States Immigration Service and Border Patrol

#### The Origins of the Border Patrol

The first irony of U.S. immigration history is that its primary mission along the Southwest border was to prevent the migration of Chinese and Asian workers. As early as 1904, mounted watchmen of the U.S. Immigration Service, operating out of El Paso, Texas, patrolled the border as far west as California in an effort to prevent illegal Chinese crossings.

The second irony is that internal violation of U.S. laws eventually drove legislation to create a border patrol. The Eighteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, prohibiting the importation, transport, manufacture or sale of alcoholic beverages went into effect at midnight on January 16, 1920. With the passage of this constitutional amendment and the numerical limits placed on immigration to the United States by the Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924, border enforcement received renewed attention from the government. On May 28, 1924, Congress passed the Labor Appropriation Act of 1924, officially establishing the United States Border Patrol.

### The Laws

#### The Early Laws

The first actual naturalization law in the United States was the March 26, 1790 Naturalization Act restricting immigration to "free white persons." Residency requirements were established so foreigners could prove their economic worth over a legislated period of time. In 1870 the law was changed to allow a limited number of Africans to enter. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 specifically excluded Chinese as they were deemed an inferior race and undesirable. This Act was repealed in 1943 when the Magnuson Act recognized the importance of China's alliance with the US in the war against Japan.

In 1865, the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution, while intended to protect newly emancipated slaves, in effect made automatic citizens "All persons born or naturalized in the United States," regardless of the citizenship of the parents. (Unfortunately, current U.S. immigration law often results in the tragic separation of families or the forced departure of children with full U.S. citizenship when an "illegal" parent is deported.)

#### The Quota System

The 1921 Emergency Quota Act and Immigration Act of 1924 established national quotas on immigration based on the 1910 census figures of foreign-born residents in the US. The original intent may have been to maintain some level of protection for US workers from large influxes of skilled foreign workers. But the racial and ethnic quotas clearly reflected the racist attitude of the time that white Europeans were more desirable than any other diversity.

Partly in response to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960's, these racial distinctions embarrassed the government and were eliminated from the code with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. However, country quotas remained for foreign-born U.S. citizens who were expected to request family reunification. A visa system was created allowing foreign family members to request legal entry to the U.S. on a first-come, first-served basis.

#### Present Day Immigration Laws and Dilemmas

With a family-based immigration system, immigration quickly became a "Chain Migration" process in which legal immigrants already here sponsor new relatives who become legal and in turn

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## General Assembly Returns to Frankfort in January; First 5 Local Catholics @ the Capitol Events Successful; 5 More Still Planned

The 2009 regular session of the General Assembly is almost upon us. On January 6, lawmakers will travel to Frankfort to begin a 30-day session. After meeting for four days in January to elect the leadership of both houses, they will recess and return in February to complete the remaining 24 days.

In preparation for these days, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky implemented a pilot project in place of our usual Catholics @ the Capitol event. With the approval of Kentucky's four Catholic bishops, the Conference worked with its various advisory committees to host events in each diocese where Catholics could gather to learn about issues which will come before lawmakers during this session.

The directors of the four Catholic Charities agencies, and their staff, took on the burden of organizing these local events. In addition to inviting Catholic parishioners, they invited their State Senators and State Representatives.

Before Thanksgiving five such events took place. Although everyone hoped more legislators would attend, organizers were pleased with the number of parishioners present. In these five sessions, the number of parishioners present already exceeds the number who have been able to spend an evening and a day in Frankfort at the regular gathering of Catholics @ the Capitol.

These five events took place in Columbia, Stanton, Cold Spring, Lexington and Paducah.

After an overview of the seven principles of Catholic social doctrine, Fr. Pat Delahanty, interim director of the Conference, has described how the issues the Conference works on are organized around four moral priorities: Protecting Human Life, Promoting Family Life, Pursuing Social Justice, and Practicing Global Solidarity.

Various presenters then describe several of the issues expected to come before legislators in the upcoming session. The Conference plans to support a bill requiring in-person, informed consent of a woman seeking an abortion. The current law does not require that a woman see a doctor to discuss this surgery before she undergoes it.

The Conference is also continuing its support for a bill that would provide tax credits to employers who hire people who face certain barriers, as well as providing low-income working persons already eligible for the federal earned income tax credit and additional state credit.

Working with a broad coalition—Kentucky Voices for Health—the

Conference will be urging a significant increase in the tobacco tax to reduce the number of teens who begin smoking and to encourage Kentucky's pregnant women to stop smoking.

Below is information on the remaining five events in this series. There are some fees involved, so please contact the Catholic Charities agency in Louisville or Owensboro for more information.

Saturday, January 3 – Archdiocese of Louisville  
St. Christopher Church  
1225 S Wilson Road  
Radcliff, KY  
10am – 1pm Eastern Time

Saturday, January 10 – Diocese of Owensboro  
Holy Spirit  
2232 Smallhouse Rd  
Bowling Green, KY  
10am – 2pm Central Time

Wednesday, January 14 – Archdiocese of Louisville  
Bellarmine University  
2000 Newburg Road  
Frazier Hall  
Louisville, KY  
5pm – 8pm Eastern time

Saturday, January 17 – Archdiocese of Louisville  
St. Catharine College  
Health Sciences Building  
2735 Bardstown Road  
Springfield, KY  
10am – 1pm

Saturday, January 24 – Diocese of Owensboro  
St. Pius X Parish  
3814 US 60 East  
Owensboro, KY  
10am – 2pm Central Time

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sponsor additional relatives.

The archaic quotas of the 1960's legislation were completely inadequate for the immigration flood of the 70's and 80's. There were the political refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Then refugees escaping the wars and government persecutions in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua. More recently, the United States is continuing to demand medical workers from the Philippines, software engineers from India and, most recently, professional business people from China.

The system was unable to handle this demand and the flood of "illegal" immigrants rapidly escalated to well over one million annually. The problem we are hearing about today was here long before the recent high-profile migrations from Mexico.

However, rather than focus on reforming the antiquated and over-burdened processing system, Congress took an enforcement approach. They enacted the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 creating penalties for employers who hire illegal immigrants, an amnesty program for illegal immigrants already here, and in-

creased support for the Border Patrol. Then in 1996, the Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act established new definitions of criminal activity for which immigrants could be deported. The current waiting time for processing legal claims to naturalization continues to grow, now exceeding five years!

The issues of immigration have been with us for over almost two centuries. They continue to be highly emotional and controversial, but they must be fixed. Regardless of where one stands on this, our nation remains for the world as the symbol for freedom and a better life. As a nation, the symbol for our principles of liberty and freedom is the Statue of Liberty. There is no clearer statement of these principles and a beacon for where we must go than the words engraved there since 1886:

Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

# *Healing and Prevention: An Update from the Four Dioceses of Kentucky*

The Church has experienced a serious crisis in our times. The sexual abuse of children by priests and church employees and the failure to adequately address this crime have created unspeakable pain for victims and their families and a lack of trust among many in the Church and in the community. We continue to seek forgiveness for the harm that has been done.

No child should ever be abused by anyone, especially by someone who has a position of responsibility and trust within the Church. We acknowledge the pain and suffering that sexual abuse in the Church has caused and the long process of restoring trust that has been lost. We commit ourselves to addressing the problem of child sexual abuse in our parishes, families, and in the community and to seeking healing and wholeness for those who have been harmed.

In 2002 the Bishops of the United States adopted the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which provided a system of response, reporting, accountability, and safe environment measures to address the sexual abuse of minors by church personnel. Since this document was adopted, the four Kentucky dioceses have been very active in the areas of education, prevention, and healing for victims through the following initiatives:

- Each diocese has a written policy on the sexual abuse of minors by priests, deacons, church employees, and volunteers.
- Each diocese has a Victim Assistance Coordinator who responds with care and compassion to victims of sexual abuse by church employees.
- Each diocese has a sexual abuse review board consisting primarily of lay professionals, not employed by the diocese, with expertise in this area.
- Each diocese has steps in place to respond to accusations. These include reporting accusations to civil authorities, supporting a victim's right to report accusations to civil authorities, and dealing fairly with those accused in accordance with canon and civil law.
- Each diocese has removed all priests with a substantiated accusation of sexual abuse from public ministry and has reported all cases to the Holy See for disposition as required by Canon law.
- Each diocese has pledged never to transfer a priest or deacon with a substantiated case of sexual abuse to another diocese.
- Each diocese conducts criminal background record checks on all church personnel (employees and volunteers) who regularly work with children.
- Each diocese requires all church personnel (employees

and volunteers) to attend a safe environment training session on sexual abuse. Thus far more than 42,700 have been trained.

- Each diocese conducts age-appropriate educational programs for children about sexual abuse.

Independent and professional audits have been conducted on the policies, and prevention and education programs of all Kentucky dioceses. Kentucky dioceses have been found to be fully compliant with all provisions of the Charter. These audits are available at <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp>. The latest report is at <http://www.usccb.org/ocyp/annualreport.pdf>.

In addition, Kentucky dioceses have responded with financial compensation and counseling assistance to victims of past abuse. Thus far more than \$75 million has been provided to more than 500 victims. During the 2008 legislative session, the Kentucky bishops joined with many others to pass House Bill 211, which broadened Kentucky's child sex abuse laws while increasing penalties for abusers and those who fail to report abuse.

We can only hope that these measures will make a positive contribution to community-wide efforts to eradicate child abuse of any kind. In 2007, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services received reports of more than 68,164 children who were being abused or neglected by a caregiver. About 32,627 were accepted for investigation, and nearly 10,000 were substantiated.

Nationwide, an estimated 906,000 children are victims of abuse & neglect every year, and the rate of victimization is 12.3 children per 1,000 children. In Kentucky in 2007, there were 3,468 children reported to the Department for Community Based Services as victims of child sexual abuse. We know that sexual abuse in particular is underreported because of shame on the part of victims, manipulation by perpetrators, and lack of awareness on the part of other adults in children's lives. We believe that empowering children and educating adults will contribute to prevention and to an increase in the reporting of sexual abuse.

Information and education about the nature, signs, and causes of abuse will reduce the risk of further abuse. In addition, studies show that risk is reduced as families benefit from parenting training, understanding of child development, assistance with basic economic necessities, and supportive social networks.

These are all common good issues that need to receive priority in our Commonwealth. As we deal with the effects of sexual abuse of minors in our own faith community, we will continue to work to prevent abuse and to heal all who suffer as a result of what is often a vicious cycle of harm to children.

# Faithful Citizenship and 'imperfect law'

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* was issued in November 2007. Since 1976, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has released such statements on political responsibility every four years, a time line that coincides with the cycle of the national elections.

In these quadrennial statements, the national body of Catholic bishops sets forth a coherent set of principles and norms rooted in Scripture and in Church social doctrine on the socio-political order. The themes of Catholic social teaching also appeal to common moral grounds that resonate "in the hearts of all people of good will." (FCFC n. 43)

The bishops uphold the role of the Church in public affairs and its right to have a voice in the formulation of public policy. Since religious bodies legitimately enjoy that right based on the democratic process in a pluralistic society, the Church's engagement in the public order should neither be misconstrued as a threat to democratic procedures nor an insertion into partisan politics. (FCFC nn. 1-12)

The "Introduction" to "Forming Consciences" asserts that as pastoral teachers "we bishops do not intend to tell Catholics for whom or against whom to vote. Our purpose is to help Catholics form their consciences in accordance with God's truth. We recognize that the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience, and that participation goes well beyond casting a vote in a particular election." (FCFC n. 7)

In particular, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* offers two clarifications for understanding the moral demands entailed in political responsibilities.

First, the current statement on political responsibility develops an extensive Church teaching on the concept of a well-formed conscience as well as catechesis on the role of the virtue of prudence. (FCFC nn. 17-18; 19-20)

Secondly, the 2007 guidelines on political responsibility are noteworthy for specifically addressing in detail the topic of prudential judgments according to the principles of a well-formed conscience. That section entitled "Making Moral Choices" discusses the concrete ethically challenging decisions which Catholics may face in voting on issues and candidates.

"Forming Consciences" clearly states that judgments of a properly formed conscience should stand in opposition "to laws and other policies that violate human life or weaken its protection." Otherwise, Catholics who would "knowingly, willingly, and directly support public policies or legislation undermine fundamental moral principles cooperate with evil." (FCFC n. 31)

Prior to analyzing the specific norms for voting according to a well-formed conscience, "Forming Consciences" spells out the relationship between the exercise of political prudence and the ethics of "imperfect legislation."

In accord with the *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* (2001) and *Living the Gospel of Life* (1998), Section 32 of "Forming Consciences" states: "Sometimes morally flawed laws already exist. In this situation, the process of framing legislation to protect life is subject to prudential judgment and 'the art of the possible.' At times this process may restore justice only partially or gradually. For example, Pope John Paul II taught that when a government official who fully opposes abortion and cannot succeed in completely overturn-



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ing a pro-abortion law, he or she may work to improve protection for unborn human life, 'limiting the harm done by such a law' and lessening its negative impact as much as possible (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 73). Such incremental improvements in the law are acceptable as steps toward the full restoration of justice." (FCFC n. 32)

Nevertheless, the understanding that politics is "the art of the possible" is not a justification for Catholic voters or public officials to abandon "the moral requirement to seek full protection for all human life from the moment of conception until natural death." (FCFC n. 32)

*Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*, a 1998 statement from the U.S.C.C.B., states: "No public official, especially one claiming to be a faithful and serious Catholic, can responsibly advocate or actively support direct attacks on innocent human life." However, the statement recognizes that "[c]ertainly there are times when it may be impossible to overturn or prevent passage of a law allowing the destruction of nascent human life. In such cases an elected official whose position in

favor of life is known could seek legitimately to limit the harm done by law. However, no appeal to policy, procedure, majority will or pluralism ever excuses a public official from defending life to the greatest possible extent." (LGL n. 32)

The 2001 *Pastoral Plan Pro-Life for Pro-Life Activities* of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops adopts the legitimacy of supporting "Laws Less than Perfect." Thus, the Pastoral Plan likewise stresses that "[w]hile at times human law may not fully articulate the moral imperative — full protection for the right to life — our legal system can and must be continually reformed so that it will increasingly fulfill its proper task of protecting the weak and preserving the right to life of every human being, born and unborn."

"Reverence for Life: Conscience and Faithful Citizenship," the January 2008 pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky, refers to the teaching of Pope John Paul II on the question of "imperfect law": "In 'Evangelium Vitae' Pope John Paul II addressed the problem of conscience in cases where an elected official who is unalterably opposed to abortion might support proposals directed at limiting the harm caused by permissive legislation. (EV n. 73) When such permissive laws cannot realistically be overturned or abrogated, voting for a more restrictive law does not 'represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law.' It is a valid approach to limiting evil aspects of such legislation."

In regard to the issue of "imperfect law" and public policy proposals on abortion, the Catholic Conference of Kentucky's pastoral also comments that "[d]ifferences in prudential decisions concerning the political reality of public policy proposals should not be construed as a compromise of moral principles." To quote Pope John Paul II, support of legislation that limits the harm sanctioned by present laws "does not in fact represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law, but rather a legitimate attempt to limit evil aspects." (EV n. 73)

This question of morally flawed laws had been raised earlier in "Reverence for Life — The Pursuit of Justice," a pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Bishops of Kentucky in 1992 and later revised in 1999.

In "Reverence of Life: The Pursuit of Justice" (1999), our bishops observed that "[a]t times the debate over legal and legislative initiatives has proved to be divisive within the pro-life movement itself."

In retrospect, the late Cardinal John O'Connor, at that time the archbishop of New York and chair of the Pro-Life Committee of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, had judged that the issue

# Faithful Citizenship and 'imperfect law'

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of "imperfect law" was becoming divisive within the pro-life movement in the late 1980s and the early 1990s.

Cardinal O'Connor (d. 2000) made an important contribution to the discussion of that controversy in a 1990 statement, "Abortion: Questions and Answers." In those reflections, he crafted a helpful clarification: "It seems to me that our goal must always be to advance protection of the unborn child to the maximum degree possible. It certainly seems to me, however, that in cases in which perfect legislation is clearly impossible, it is morally acceptable to support a pro-life bill, however reluctantly, that contains exceptions if the following conditions prevail: A) There is no other feasible bill restricting permissive abortion laws to a greater degree than the proposed bill. B) The proposed bill is more restrictive than existing law, that is, the bill does not weaken the current law's restraints on abortion. And, C) The proposed bill does not negate the responsibility of future, more restrictive laws." (June 14, 1990)

In 1989, the Pro-Life Committee of the national conference of Catholic bishops recommended that the tactics of pro-life advocates ought not provide "their adversaries an easy victory by launching attacks on each over questions of political strategies.

If differences in strategies and licit prudential options are equated with differences in moral principles, the ensuing self-defeating divisiveness would replace dialogue and civility. To counteract such polarization, "Reverence for Life — The Pursuit of Justice" calls for a spirit of civility which will enhance the prospects for creating necessary coalitions in society.

In 1999, along these same lines of thought, Cardinal Adam Maida of Detroit delivered a trenchant analysis on the rightful role of religion in shaping culture, law, and public policy (Adam Cardinal Maida. 1999 "Shaping Culture and Law: Religion's Voice," *Origins* 28:42: 721, 723-726.).

In that address, Cardinal Maida spoke to the need to recapture civility in public argument. In his opinion, in some circumstances and with specific controversial issues, religious advocacy was being discredited a by failure to engage in genuine dialogue. For this rea-

son, the voices of religious people are in effect being silenced, if not simply dismissed. The concomitant ineffectiveness to build a necessary consensus in the broader society may well stem from tactics which communicate a tone of condemnation evidenced by the volley of "harsh judgments against people who think differently than themselves."

Cardinal Maida's judgment coalesced with a caution expressed by the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin (d. 1996) in a 1990 article on approaching the abortion question: "There is a temptation simply to proclaim positions, forgetting that in a pluralistic society, we must persuade, build coalitions, and reach out to shape public opinion to support human life." (Joseph Cardinal Bernardin. 1990. "The Consistent Ethic of Life after 'Webster,'" *Commonweal* 117:8: 243-244.)

In the "Conclusion" of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the bishops place emphasis on the following premises for building a world of respect for human life and dignity: "The Church is principled but not ideological. We cannot compromise basic principles or moral teachings. We are committed to clarity about our moral teaching and to civility. In public life, it is important to practice the virtues of justice and charity that are at the core of our Tradition. We should work with others in a variety of ways to advance our moral principles." (FCFC n. 60)

## Needed: More Faithful Citizen Advocates

Faced with hundreds of proposed bills, State Senators and State Representatives welcome guidance from their constituents on many issues. Your views and opinions are very important to them.

Catholics offer a unique perspective when weighing whether to support or oppose legislation, neither liberal nor conservative, neither Republican nor Democrat. We focus on issues and judge whether or not a bill respects human life and dignity or is harmful to human life and dignity. We bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Capitol's Senate and House chambers.

Your important voice and that of fellow parishioners, pastors, and other church leaders is essential in bringing this unique perspective to the halls of our state capitol. Sign up to join our Faithful Citizen Advocacy Network today. Visit [www.ccky.org](http://www.ccky.org) and click on the big headline inviting you. Already a member? Please help sign up five additional parishioners as Faithful Citizen Advocates to be Christ's voice in Frankfort.

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