

### Quotes About Lay Political Involvement



### Quotes from Our Leaders Regarding Faithful Citizenship

“We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.” -Pope Francis, 9/16/2013

"This now overturned legislation reflects an ominous trend in our society. Abortion supporters, having long denied that unborn children have a right to life, would deny that their fellow Americans who seek to protect the unborn have the same rights as other Americans – the right to freedom of speech and freedom of association; the right to participate in the public square and serve the vulnerable in accord with our moral convictions. Increasingly we see this trend evidenced at various levels of government. We are encouraged and pleased to know that with regard to this particular issue, our highest court has affirmed the American tradition of basic constitutional rights for all."

--Cardinal O'Malley statement from June 2014 on Buffer Zones

During the last day of the Dec. 9-12 "Ecclesia in America" congress at the Vatican, Cardinal O'Malley said he believes things are "only going to get worse because Catholics themselves don't worry about defending the unborn or teaching the true meaning of life." "We need to be much more proactive to prepare our laity and help them understand what a crucial role they have in public life and in the media where they're forming public opinion and educating people

through different means that have a great impact in society.” He added, “if we’re going to evangelize the culture, we need to have evangelizers in those areas.” “There are just not enough legislators who favor life,” he said...

--Cardinal O'Malley told CNA on Dec. 13, 2012

Because the common good is at stake, it is imperative that we exercise our right and duty to vote. As recognized by Pope Benedict XVI, the laity should “participate in political life, in a manner consistently in accordance with the Church’s teaching, bringing their well-founded reasons and high ideals into the democratic debate[.]” -- Papal Address to the Pontifical Council for the Laity (May 21, 2010).

Particularly for us as Catholics, voting is an exercise of reason inspired by faith. The Holy Father has thus observed: “Just as every economic decision has a moral consequence, so too in the political field, the ethical dimension of policy has far-reaching consequences that no government can afford to ignore[.]” “This is why,” he continued, “the world of reason and the world of faith—the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief—need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization.” -- Papal Address at Westminster Hall, England, Sept. 17, 2010.

Our participation as citizens in the electoral process allows us to propose our vision for this country and about our future as a democracy. Thus voting is above all an opportunity—an occasion for contributing our insights as Catholics to the civic discussion nationally and locally, thereby inspiring social change consistent with our country’s foundational values.

-Selected Paragraphs from the MCC 2010 “Hope for a Better Tomorrow.”

The question for those elected officials who opposed allowing the marriage amendment to be voted on by the people is: do we live in a country where people are free to vote their conscience or are we controlled by what is viewed as politically correct and by powerful special interest groups? -Statement from the MCC, June 14, 2007

Society has a moral responsibility for the good of future generations to commit strongly to the institution of marriage as it has been recognized from time immemorial. Each of us must exercise our rights as citizens, and urge our legislators to vote to move the Marriage Amendment to the 2008 ballot and allow every citizen's voice to be heard.

-From Cardinal Sean's Blog, May, 2007

"The Church's witness, then, is of its nature public: she seeks to convince by proposing rational arguments in the public square. The legitimate separation of Church and State cannot be taken to mean that the Church must be silent on certain issues, nor that the State may choose not to engage, or be engaged by, the voices of committed believers in determining the values which

will shape the future of the nation."

- **Pope Benedict - Address to US Bishops on their AD LIMINA visit - January 19, 2012**

"It is imperative that the entire Catholic community in the United States come to realize the grave threats to the Church's public moral witness presented by a radical secularism which finds increasing expression in the political and cultural spheres. The seriousness of these threats needs to be clearly appreciated at every level of ecclesial life. Of particular concern are certain attempts being made to limit that most cherished of American freedoms, the freedom of religion." - **Pope Benedict - Address to US Bishops on their AD LIMINA visit - January 19, 2012**

[https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20120119\\_bishops-usa.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2012/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120119_bishops-usa.html)

"None of us can say, 'I have nothing to do with this, they govern. No, no, I am responsible for their governance, and I have to do the best so that they govern well, and I have to do my best by participating in politics according to my ability. Politics, according to the Social Doctrine of the Church, is one of the highest forms of charity, because it serves the common good. I cannot wash my hands, eh? We all have to give something!" - **Pope Francis - Daily Homily - September 16, 2013**

"Catholics must get involved in politics even if it may be dirty, frustrating and fraught with failure. Given today's throwaway culture and so many problems unfolding in the world, Do I as a Catholic watch from my balcony? No, you can't watch from the balcony. Get right in there!" - **Pope Francis - May 1, 2015**

Here are some of Pope Francis' quotes specifically from the article in the *Pilot*:

"Like a soccer match, life only takes players on the first string and has no room for bench warmers."

"Today's world demands that you be a protagonist of history, because life is always beautiful when we choose to live it fully, when we choose to leave a mark."

"He(God) wants to make you see that, with you, the world can be different. For the fact is, unless you offer the best of yourselves, the world will never be different."

## Appendix

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops provides a wealth of information in **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship**

. Every four years, during the Presidential election, the Catholic Bishops meet and approve this document which serves as a guide for all Catholics. The document applies to all priests, deacons, religious and laity. The following Pastoral Plan is from the USCCB's office of Pro-Life Activities.

### **Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life**

In our present social context, marked by a dramatic struggle between the "culture of life" and the "culture of death", there is need to *develop a deep critical sense*, capable of discerning true values and authentic needs.

What is urgently called for is a

*general mobilization of consciences*

and a

*united ethical effort*

to activate a

*great campaign in support of life. All together, we must build a new culture of life.*

- Blessed John Paul II, *The Gospel of Life*, no. 95 (emphasis added) ‘

**lay persons and volunteers**, who through their charisms and unique responsibilities impact individuals and the broader community in a profound way when they assume roles of leadership in their parishes and in society

We are reminded that "the Church must be committed to the task of educating and supporting lay people involved in law-making, government and the administration of justice, so that legislation will always reflect those principles and moral values which are in conformity with a sound anthropology and advance the common good" (*The Church in America*, no. 19, quoting Synod for America, proposition 72).

The Declaration of Independence, written more than two hundred years ago, speaks of the "Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" before making this historic assertion: " *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.* "

Today we see the tensions increasing between these founding principles and political reality. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the continuing effort to ignore the right to life of unborn children, as well as in efforts to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a "Gospel of life." It invites all persons to a new life lived abundantly in respect for human dignity. We believe that this Gospel is not only a complement to American . . . principles, but also the cure for the spiritual sickness now infecting our society. .

. . We cannot simultaneously commit ourselves to human rights and progress while eliminating or marginalizing the weakest among us. Nor can we practice the Gospel of life only as a private piety. American Catholics must live it vigorously and publicly, as a matter of national leadership and witness, or we will not live it at all. ( *Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 20)

The law is not the only means of protecting life, but it plays a key and often decisive role in affecting both human behavior and thinking. Those called to civil leadership, as Pope John Paul II reminds us, "have a duty to make courageous choices in support of life, especially through *legislative measures*

." This is a responsibility that cannot be put aside, "especially when he or she has a legislative or decision-making mandate, which calls that person to answer to God, to his or her own conscience and to the whole of society for choices which may be contrary to the common good" ( *The Gospel of Life*, no. 90).

Public officials are privileged in a special way to apply their moral convictions to the policy arena. We hold in high esteem those who, through such positions and authority, promote respect for all human life. Catholic civil leaders who reject or ignore the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life do so at risk to their own spiritual well-being. "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" ( *Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 32).

§ passage of a constitutional amendment that will protect unborn children's right to life to the maximum degree possible, and pursuit of appropriate strategies to attain this goal

§ federal and state laws and administrative policies that restrict the practice of abortion as much as possible and that prohibit government support of abortion, human cloning, and research that destroys human embryos

§ continual challenging of the scope of and ultimate reversing of the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court and other courts denying the right to life

§ support for legislation that provides morally acceptable alternatives to abortion, including funding to expand education, health, nutrition, and other services for disadvantaged parents and their children

§ support for federal and state legislation that promotes effective palliative care for those who are chronically ill or dying

§ support for efforts to prevent legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide by legislation or referendum

§ support for efforts to end the death penalty

A public policy program requires well-planned and coordinated advocacy by citizens at the national, state, and local levels. Such activity is not solely the responsibility of Catholics but instead requires widespread cooperation and collaboration on the part of groups large and small, religious and secular. As U.S. citizens and religious leaders, we see a critical moral imperative for public policy efforts to ensure the protection of human life. We urge our fellow citizens to see the justice of this cause and to work with us to achieve these objectives.

### **Laws Less Than Perfect**

While 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. In *The Gospel of Life*, Pope John Paul II explains that one may support "imperfect" legislation—legislation that, for example, does not ban all abortions but puts some control on a current more permissive law by aiming to limit the number of abortions—if that is the best that can be achieved at a particular time. In doing so one seeks to limit the harm done by the present law: "This does not in fact represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law, but rather a legitimate and proper attempt to limit its evil aspects" (no. 73).