



Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland

Bishop Emeritus

Diocese Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Moral Responsibility To Be Active Citizens

Board of Directors

Missouri Catholic Conference

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Dear Friends in Christ,

Our Catholic faith informs every dimension of our lives.

The teaching of Jesus makes clear the essential link between loving God with all of our mind, heart and soul and loving our neighbor. In a society where we, the people, elect those who have the authority to enact laws and determine public policies that impact significantly the life and welfare of every Missourian and every American, Catholics have a moral responsibility to be active citizens.

For a Catholic, voting is both a privilege and a responsibility. We not only have a moral responsibility to vote, but also to be well-informed voters. It is important that we take the time to study issues and the positions of candidates.

As Catholics, we also bring the values of our faith into the voting booth. Our respect for the sanctity of human life, our concern for the care of the poor and those on the margins of our society, our thirst for justice and peace, and our desire that every American have the opportunity for adequate health care must inform our election choices.

As we approach the coming election, our nation faces the prospect of war with Iraq. September 11, 2001, was a sober reminder of the vulnerability of our nation to attacks by terrorists or hostile nations. Our nation has the right to protect itself and to prevent future attacks. At the same time, recourse to armed conflict can only be morally justified as a last resort when all other realistic alternatives have been exhausted. We need to select leaders for our nation who have both the courage and wisdom to develop and implement policies that will result in a just and lasting peace for our world.

At the heart of Catholic social teaching lies the conviction that human life is sacred, and that every person has inherent dignity and must be respected in society. Human life is a gift from God, sacred and inviolable. Because every human person is created in the image and likeness of God, we have a duty to defend human life at all stages and in every condition. However, abortion and euthanasia are the preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all other goods to exist. Therefore, we must consider whether the positions of candidates for elective office will protect and respect life from conception to natural death.

Finally, we encourage your prayers for our nation during this challenging time. May the Lord help us to choose wise and able leaders who will strive to protect human life and promote hu-

man dignity to the maximum degree possible.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Justin Rigali, D.D.
Archbishop of St. Louis

Most Reverend Raymond J. Boland, D.D.
Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

Most Reverend John R. Gaydos, D.D.
Bishop of Jefferson City

Most Reverend John Leibrecht, D.D., Ph.D.
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

Most Reverend Joseph Naumann, V.G.
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