



Catholic Citizenship And Public Policy

The Knights of Columbus is a Catholic men's fraternal service organization whose mission is to witness to our Catholic principles of charity, unity and fraternity by performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy locally and throughout the world. The Knights of Columbus believes that the best way to renew society and build a true "civilization of love" is through the personal witness of its members to the love of Jesus Christ. The Knights of Columbus gives no more compelling witness to the love of Jesus Christ than when its members are united in fraternal bond performing charitable works.

In addition to performing charitable works, the Knights of Columbus encourages its members to meet their responsibilities as Catholic citizens and to become active in the political life of their local communities, to vote and to speak out on the public issues of the day. To understand these responsibilities, the Knights of Columbus looks to The Second Vatican Council, which identifies the mission of the Catholic faithful to build a society consistent with Gospel values when it states, "By reason of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will.... Thus especially by the witness of their life resplendent in faith, hope and charity, they must manifest Christ to others." [1]

In the political realm, this means opening our public policy efforts and deliberations to the life of Christ and the teachings of the Church. In accord with our Bishops, the Knights of Columbus has consistently maintained positions that take these concerns into account. The Order supports and promotes the social doctrine of the Church, including a robust vision of religious liberty that embraces religion's proper role in the private and public spheres. The Knights of Columbus supports policies that promote a Culture of Life and opposes legislative efforts that promote pornography, contraception, sterilization, cloning, the destruction of embryos, abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia. As Saint Pope John Paul II once said, "Abortion and euthanasia are [...] crimes which no human law can claim to legitimize. There is no obligation in conscience to obey such laws; instead there is a grave and clear obligation to oppose them by conscientious objection." [2] The Knights of Columbus also promotes the dignity and the irreplaceable value of the family founded on the Church's understanding of marriage as the faithful, exclusive, and lifelong union of one man and one woman joined in an intimate partnership of life and love.

Altogether, we are called to promote a civilization of love that is possible when the law honors the dignity of marriage and the dignity of each human person from conception to natural death. The Order joins with our bishops and the national bishops' conferences throughout the world in their efforts to achieve legal and constitutional protection for human life, religious liberty, and marriage at the national, state, territorial, and local levels. If a candidate for public office displays a sustained commitment to policies conflicting with these reasonable goals, we reserve the right to withhold our votes from such a candidate. If such a candidate prevails, we will express our principled disagreement with his or her policy choices as informed Catholic constituents.



In all of these efforts prayer is indispensable. We will pray that the Holy Spirit enlighten elected officials and judges to adopt laws and make judicial decisions that respect religious liberty and affirm life and the authentic nature of marriage.

[1] *DOGmatic CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH LUMEN GENTIUM SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI ON NOVEMBER 21, 1964, 31*, available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (last visited June 2, 2016).

[2] *Saint Pope John Paul II, Evangelium vitae, March 25, 1995, 73*, available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html (last visited June 2, 2016).

As stewards of the Knights of Columbus reputation, state deputies have a responsibility to know what is going on in their jurisdictions and to report to the Supreme Council any irregularities, misconduct, or abuse. The Order has procedures and protocols to effectively address allegations of wrongdoing, but we can do so only if we receive timely notification from our fraternal partners in the field. For this reason, state deputies should promote open channels of communication within their state councils and subordinate councils in order to receive critical information at the earliest possible stage. Upon receipt of such critical information, state deputies should convey it immediately to the Supreme Advocate.

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