

CATHOLIC BISHOPS, PUBLIC POLICY AND THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION

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CATHOLIC BISHOPS, PUBLIC POLICY AND PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

In the recent presidential election in the United States the role played by traditional Christian values gained a great deal of attention. This was primarily because of the link between the fundamentalist Christian right and the Republican Party. Another significant connection between Christian values and the election was the role played by the Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church. The major source of contention arose over the official Church position on abortion, same-sex marriage and stem-cell research and the position adopted by the Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry a Catholic whose position on these issues was at variance with those of his Church. The possible role they played in his defeat has major implications not only for Catholics in public life but also for the future of the Democratic Party. At the same time the relationship of Catholic social teachings and the role of the Bishops both in the formulation of public social policy and as moral leaders of the Catholic community are of importance for a group that makes up about one quarter of the American electorate. It is the purpose of this paper to examine some of these implications for the future role played by Catholics and the Catholic Church in American public policy.

This paper will be divided into three major parts. The first will examine the role of the Bishops within the Catholic Community and through their national organization the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in American public life. This will include a brief overview of the principal aspects of Catholic social teaching which provide the basis for their intervention in the formulation of public policy. The second part will concentrate on the role of the Bishops in the 2004 Presidential election including an overview of the reasons for a shift to a more hard line attitude to Catholic politicians who deviate from Catholic social teachings on issues such as abortion. The third section will examine some of the surveys of religion and politics carried out for the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2004 as it applies to Catholics. This will indicate that the positions of Catholics on public issues are divided even among Catholics. It will conclude with some comments on the implications of these divisions not only for the political parties in the United States but the leadership of the Bishops within the Catholic Community.

INTRODUCTION

Although there have been Catholics in what is now the United States since the seventeenth century, neither individual Catholics nor the institutional church played a major role in national political life before the twentieth century. In many ways the idea of a public Catholicism with views on major policy issues is not really viable before the 1960s. There are many reasons for this historical development.¹

¹ There are several histories of Catholicism in the United States. Much of the historical material is based largely on Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of an American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002 and John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, New York: W. W. Norton, 2003

In the period prior to 1960 the emphasis by both individual Catholics and the institutional church centred on the assimilation of vast numbers of European immigrants into American society along with establishing their credentials as loyal Americans whose first allegiance was to the United States. Moreover the issues that have driven a deep wedge into American society known as moral values were politically as well as socially of less significance. Abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality and to a lesser extent birth control existed but in the shadows. They were not issues that either political party would have embraced as part of their national platform. On these issues voters of all religious persuasions would have been in broad agreement. On foreign policy issues as well there was little difference among voters as well. Catholics were overwhelmingly anti-Communist. They were supportive of American foreign policy under both Republicans and Democrats. Issues of war and peace were often seen as ways of establishing their credentials as “Americans.” At the same time, Roman Catholics of all classes and ethnicity (as well as Jewish voters in must be added) supported the Democratic Party in overwhelming numbers. This was in part due to the nativist strain that still existed in the Republican Party. The other major factor that attracted Catholics to the Democratic Party was class and economics. The Republican Party was seen (and was for the most part) the party of business and Catholics were overwhelmingly part of labour and strong supporters of unions.

Since the 1960s this broad agreement among Catholic voters has of course broken down. The movement of second and third generation Catholics out of the ghettos and into the suburbs had begun before the 1960s. The arrival of Catholics into mainstream America was symbolized by the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency. But the significant change in the lives of Catholics in the 1960s both in the United States as well as world wide came with the Church Council Vatican II. The effect of both John Kennedy and Pope John XXIII calls to service shifted a new and educated generation of Catholics into a different kind of service. Equally significant was a very different kind of shift. This was the one that occurred in American culture as a result of the struggle for civil rights for African Americans, the divisiveness created by the Vietnam War and the rise of feminism. While Catholics had played a larger and more positive role in the civil rights movement the conflict over the Vietnam War and the role and rights of women created deeper divisions within the American Catholic community.

PART ONE - THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, AUTHORITY AND THE BISHOPS

The Roman Catholic Church is a hierarchical and international church². Authority is concentrated in the Papacy which claims through the dogma of infallibility control over absolute truth on matters of faith and morals when such statements are made ex cathedra. This is a highly misunderstood doctrine both within and outside the Catholic Church. It is seldom invoked by any Pope but it is intimated within the teaching magisterium of the church. The social teachings of the modern Catholic Church which date from the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) provide a broad framework of analysis of how

² There are several studies of the Catholic Church and its development but see Thomas Bokenkotter, A Concise History of the Catholic Church, Doubleday, 2004

the Catholic Church sees the modern world.³ They are not infallible statements but they do provide guidelines on all aspects of human life for how Catholics ought to live their lives. They have covered issues from broad international issues such as war and peace to how economic and social life ought to be organized to the more intimate issues of family life and sexual behaviour.

The institutional structure of the church is based on geographical units.⁴ These are organized by states and are known as archdioceses and dioceses, each headed by an archbishop or bishop. Each of these units is further composed of dozens of smaller units known as parishes and headed by individual parish priests. Within each unit parishes are linked by deaneries and dioceses are linked through national councils. But each bishop is autonomous within his own diocese and ultimately responsible only to the Pope. Historically the struggle of Rome to gain control over bishops has been with the state. Ironically as states came to recognize and enforce separation of state and church the control exercised by Rome over bishops increased. Historically, the ability of bishops and clergy to exercise control over the laity was enormous. The role of the laity was traditionally summarized in the phrase “pay, pray and obey.”

The traditional role of clergy and bishops in the lives of the laity had strong social and political overtones. This had been true in Catholic European countries but developed in settler societies such as the United States for quite different reasons. Catholic immigrants to the United States found the church as a source of community in a country where the majority of the population and of the state officials were Protestant and often anti-Catholic. The model for relationships was that of the Irish church which had survived in a British Protestant controlled state by coming to a modus vivendi in which a complex set of relationships between a Catholic clergy and laity exercised control over different aspects of life within a Protestant state. This model was in many ways exported to the United States.⁵ And it worked as long as no conflict existed between clergy and laity over the goals of the Catholic community.

The conflict developed in the 1960s. It is one of the great ironies that the Vatican II Council which introduced massive changes in the ritual structures of the Catholic Church with intimations of more significant structural changes came at the same time as the cultural basis of life shifted even more dramatically in North America and Western Europe. The changes that came as a result of a shift in sexual mores following the introduction of birth control and the emphasis on individual rights and freedoms as a result of the civil rights movement particularly in the United States meant that the old

³ For papal encyclicals see Richard W. Rousseau, Human Dignity and the Common Good: The Great Papal Social Encyclicals from Leo XIII to John Paul II, Westport: Greenwood Press, 2001.

⁴ There are several studies of the Catholic Church and its structures but see Thomas J. Reese, Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

⁵ For the Irish Church see Emmet Larkin, The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism, Washington: The Catholic University of America, 1984. See also Kirby A. Miller, Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985; Gretchen M. MacMillan, State, Society and Authority: The Foundations of the Modern Irish State, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994.

rules and behaviour came under attack. Authority shifted and was attacked at all levels not only in the church but in all institutions both private and public.

The conflict over sexual mores and the hierarchy was joined when the Papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (On Human Life) was released.⁶ It condemned the use of artificial birth control by Roman Catholic married couples. Ironically the papal decision was meant to reinforce the authority of the magisterium of the church, but few other decisions have so undermined the authority of the bishops and clergy. There was no legal or outwardly coercive method of enforcing church teachings. Catholic married couples who in the past might have felt their choice was either leaving the church or conforming to the rules now adopted a third choice. They stayed in the church and practiced birth control. In time this would come to apply to other areas of church teaching as well. This is often referred to as ‘Cafeteria Catholicism’.

Vatican II Council had approved several documents that changed the relationship between the church, laity and the broader society. One of the most significant was the Declaration of Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) drafted primarily by the American Jesuit John Courtney Murray and strongly supported by the American bishops.⁷ It reinforced the primacy of the individual conscience and the dignity of the human person along with limitations on the ability of the state to exercise coercion over the freedom of individuals and groups, particularly religious freedom. This was revolutionary in the context of the history of Catholicism in which the traditional emphasis had been on the use of the coercive state often to enforce the position of the church on moral issues. The traditional emphasis within Catholicism had been more on the common good and less on the individual. While the document continued to emphasize that law and civil society ought to look first to the common good it also indicated the importance of human persons and the dignity of their individual conscience.

Another document that would prove to be of significance for the role of the Catholic Church and Catholics in general in modern society was the last document approved. Known as the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) it set out an ambitious overview of the relationship between the Church and the broader society. While acknowledging the separate roles of the church and the broader political society that it operated within, it also shifted views on the role of history and culture in the shaping of Catholicism. This meant not only a new relationship or “dialogue” between Catholicism and the world but it also meant that the church became less inward looking and moved outward from the Catholic community towards the larger world. It took on a more public role in the market place. While much of what is now called Public Catholicism did not start in the 1960s the shift in attitude not only gave new roles to the laity who played a major role in the civil rights movement but also to the bishops.⁸

⁶ Unless otherwise stated all papal encyclicals can be accessed at <http://www.vatican.va> and follow links.

⁷ For Documents of Vatican II see Austin Flannery, O. P. (ed.) Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Northport: Costello Publishing Company, 1975

⁸ David J. O’Brien, Public Catholicism, New York: Macmillan and Co., 1989.

THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

This larger role for the Bishops is outlined in the mandate of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). This is to: unify, coordinate, encourage, promote and carry on Catholic activities in the United States; to organize and conduct religious, charitable and social welfare work at home and abroad; to aid in education; to care for immigrants; and generally to enter into and promote by education, publication and direction the objects of its being.⁹

The present Conference of Catholic Bishops has a similar structure and mandate that is found in national Episcopal councils that were established in all countries with Catholic populations in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. At the same time the Catholic bishops in the United States had already established mechanisms to advance issues that they considered important for the Catholic community in the United States. The American Catholic bishops had established the National Catholic War Council in 1917 to support Catholic fund raising and support personnel who provided both spiritual care and recreational services for American troops in World War I. In 1919 the bishops established the National Catholic Welfare Council.

The bishops renamed this council the National Catholic Welfare Conference in 1922. They had established an office in Washington D. C. and the emphasis of the conference was to provide consultation with Catholic groups and bishops on subjects such as education, immigration and social action. In 1966 in response to the Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church from the Vatican Council, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) was established. In 2001 it was joined with the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) with committees made up of lay people, clergy and religious as well as bishops to address issues and concerns of importance to the church and the larger community. Since July 2001, it has been called the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).¹⁰

The congressional and federal system of governance in the United States shapes the way in which the Catholic Church attempts to influence the decision making process and law making. As a religious organization and one moreover in which internal rules (Canon Law) make it impossible for it to run candidates state rules (federal laws) governing religious and charitable foundations also make it impossible to financially or even politically to support one party over another. Thus their influence is made in other ways.

The shift to a more Public Catholicism in the 1960s both as a result of Vatican II and the changes in the United States meant that the Bishops began to be involved in public affairs in a way not evident prior to this period. While at one level this was a result of increased involvement by Catholic laypersons in issues such as civil rights at another level it was the result of changes in American society concerning sexual mores. It was also reinforced

⁹ For the United States Council of Catholic Bishops see their web site at <http://www.usccb.org/htm>

¹⁰ See Thomas J. Reese, S. J., Episcopal Conferences: Historical, Canonical and Theological Studies, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1989. See also Gerald Fogarty, S. J., "Episcopal Governance in the American Church," in Francis Oakley and Bruce Russett (eds.) Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Catholic Church, New York: Continuum, 2004, pp.103-118

by Vatican II documents like *Gaudium et Spes* which encouraged Catholic participation in the public sphere.

While John F. Kennedy's speech before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association in September 1960 about the separation of his views as a Catholic and as an American had helped reassure a Protestant audience who feared the political intervention of the Papacy it had not gone down well with the bishops. They had remained quiet but privately indicated that they felt that a Catholic ought to be influenced in his publicly held beliefs by his religious views.¹¹ While the issues that the bishops had in mind in 1960 were more along the traditional views held by the Democratic Party on social issues pertaining to labour and rights, this would change in the 1970s as other issues such as abortion would come to dominate the Bishops' agenda.

The public image of the bishops has been overly obsessed with issues that relate primarily to sexual behaviour is both fair and unfair. There is no doubt that the events of the last four or five years from the scandal over the behaviour of priests accused of pedophilia and pederasty and even more importantly the attempt to deny or cover up the behaviour of priests has done much to shape the public's view of the bishops. This along with their attempt to influence John Kerry's public votes on abortion by threatening to deny him the sacraments only reinforced this viewpoint. But the reality is that the concerns of the bishops are much broader than this and that on many issues their positions on public issues both today and in the 1970s reflect positions that by any standard are to be found on the left of the political spectrum rather than on the right.

The issues of concerns for the bishops can be seen in the summary of the concerns of the Office of Government Liaison (OGL) of the USCCB. The OGL monitors legislative proposals before Congress and provides a running commentary on the Church's position on issues that are significant to the American Church. These include migration and refugees; international justice and peace; education; communication and the media; domestic social development, as well as legislation as it applies to pro-life issues.¹²

The USCCB advocates and supports policies that protect and respect human life and dignity, with special concern for those who are unborn, disabled, or terminally ill. It also seeks to eliminate legalized abortion. It is opposed to the legalization of assisted suicide or euthanasia. It is also opposed to domestic and foreign abortion funding and efforts to force states and health plans to fund abortion. While it supports medical research that respects human life, it is opposed to human cloning and harmful experiments on human embryos.

While these positions are usually seen as on the right or conservative side of the policy issues the positions adopted by the USCCB, even on issues of the sanctity of life, are often quite the opposite. The bishops have issued statements indicating their opposition to the use of the death penalty. The bishops have expressed in pastoral letters and in their public teaching the significance of Catholic social teaching on issues that affect the poor

¹¹ See Dolan, *op. cit.*

¹² For the Office of Government Liaison and its documents see <http://www.usccb.org/ogl>

and vulnerable on such issues as access to healthcare, reform of the welfare policies and addresses issues of poverty including housing and homelessness, hunger, labor and wage concerns. It has supported legislation protecting the environment as well as civil rights legislation.

The USCCB also issues a yearly report on the legislation before each Congress. In the last one issued in December 2004 on the 108th Congress they supply a detailed analysis of each piece of legislation that they supported or opposed and whether they attempted to influence members of Congress on the piece of legislation through letter writing, direct lobbying or providing testimony before house and senate committees. The areas of concerns include pro-life issues but they also include debt relief to poor nations, increased assistance to these countries, as well as legislation on immigration and migration etc.

SOCIAL TEACHINGS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The role of the Catholic Church in issues of morality and society has been linked historically to their concern with the moral character of the members of the Church. This has often been more coercive than pastoral. Moreover it was often linked to a political role that linked the hierarchy to the political elites and the maintenance of civil order and civil obedience among Catholic peasants and workers in predominantly Catholic countries.

However since Vatican II the role of the hierarchy has shifted both to a broader area of policy making while at the same time the ability of the bishops and the willingness of the laity to shape this policy publicly and to live it privately have diminished. While there is disagreement between hierarchy and laity on a wide range of issues, the framework of what the hierarchy says and more importantly, how they and the laity have been influenced over the past quarter of a century by Pope John Paul II cannot be ignored.

The issues that Pope John Paul II dealt with in his encyclicals covered all the issues that are important for the church. From the beginning of his papacy with his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Man) in 1979 the emphasis was on human rights and the theology often referred to as personalism or the dignity of each human person. The emphasis was on human freedom including religious freedom in the context of the changes in technology and science and the impact this has had on modern life.

In *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work), 1981 and *Centisimus Annus* (On the Hundredth Anniversary) published on the ninetieth and one hundredth anniversary of the great encyclical on workers and their rights *Rerum Novarum*. These documents concentrate on the work of human beings and that the proper subject of the work is the individual and not the work itself. More specifically *Centisimus Annus* concentrated on issues such as work, unions and wages, unemployment, freedom and private property.

The tenth encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* (The Splendor of Truth) issued in 1993 and the eleventh *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life) issued in 1995 both dealt with culture as well as with the immutability of moral commandments especially as they apply to acts

that are intrinsically evil. *Evangelium Vitae* outlined what he referred to as a culture of life. More specifically this encyclical condemned abortion and euthanasia. In this document he stated that the “direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral”, and declared “that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder”. Furthermore he wrote, “I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God.”¹³

This very brief review of five of the twelve encyclicals of John Paul II indicate the significance of the issues of human life, human freedom and the value and dignity of work along with his many statements on the importance of peace and avoidance of war indicate the broad framework of Catholic social teaching at this level. An overview of the pastoral letters issued by the American bishops demonstrates similar broad areas of public policy.

The degree to which the Bishops or their representatives are able to influence law making in the United States in any of these areas is open to debate. Traditionally on areas such as work and to a lesser extent issues of freedom and peace their views fit more appropriately into positions adopted by Democrats. Historically the links between the Democrats as voters and candidates and Catholicism have been quite strong. The connections between Catholic politicians and members of the clergy and hierarchy meant that much of the communication between them was informal.¹⁴ This has been under attack since the late 1960s and centred on issues of abortion, contraception, homosexuality and more recently euthanasia, stem cell research and same sex marriage. These have often been lumped together as life and family values issues.

This led to conflict with the Democratic Party leadership. This began at the 1972 Democratic Party Convention where despite the number of Catholic politicians present (and many at this stage did not support abortion) the party indicated its support for abortion rights. In fact the Democratic Party’s platform for this election was perceived as being strongly supportive of “counterculture” issues which included abortion and homosexual rights. The appeal by Richard Nixon to the “Silent Majority” and his letter to Terence Cardinal Cooke Archbishop of New York indicating his opposition to abortion began a shift not only of Catholics but also of Evangelical Christians to the Republican camp.¹⁵

While it is true that these issues since then have increased the support of Catholics for the Republican Party, the bishops have been in a much more delicate position. As indicated above according to both church and state law they could not support any particular political party. Today there are more Catholics supporting the Republican than the Democratic Party but the number of members of Congress who are Catholics and

¹³ See *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 57, 62, 65.

¹⁴ Joseph A. Califano, Jr., “Caught Between God and Caesar,” *America*, June 21-28, 2004

¹⁵ For Richard Nixon and the letter to Cardinal Cooke see Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President, 1972*, New York: Bantam Books, 1973.

members of the Republican Party has only begun to shift in the past decade.¹⁶ Traditionally most have belonged to the Democratic Party and almost all have voted in favour of abortion legislation at various times in their careers. While bishops have been concerned about this, in the past they have been reluctant to condemn Catholic politicians openly. There have been exceptions when John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York publicly condemned Mario Cuomo, the Democratic Governor of New York and Geraldine Ferraro, a New York Congresswoman and Vice-Presidential Democratic candidate in the 1984 presidential election for being pro-choice.¹⁷

PART TWO - THE BISHOPS AND THE 2004 ELECTION

The 2004 Presidential Election was not the first election that the Catholic bishops had laid out the kind of public policy they would like to see political candidates and elected politicians embrace. Moreover the major statement issued in late 2003 by the bishops, entitled Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility was not the first such document from the bishops.¹⁸ They have issued such statements or reflections which provide a summary of the main points of Catholic social teaching on public life and what they see as the key moral issues in each campaign going back to the 1970s. The reflections for the 2004 election were based on earlier documents as well as the November 2002 Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life put out by the Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith in 2002 under the name of its head Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI).¹⁹

This statement from the Office of the Doctrine of the Faith was in part influential in shaping the content of the 2004 document. There was more emphasis on the relationship between Catholics who were politicians and the social and moral teachings of the Church. Bishops had made public comments in the past about the disconnection between Catholic social and moral teachings and Catholic politicians' positions. These comments were usually in regard to the position these politicians took on abortion and euthanasia. To these were now added the bishops' opposition to same-sex marriages and stem-cell research. It would take on a different emphasis than in the past in part because the Democratic candidate John Kerry was a Catholic.

¹⁶ In the 109th Congress elected in 2004 Catholics make up 29% of the members and are the single largest faith group. There are 128 members of the House of Representatives and 24 Senators who identify themselves as Catholics. The number of Catholic Senators remains unchanged from the 108th Congress. However in the 2004 election one Catholic Senator was defeated and one Democrat and two Republicans who are Catholics were elected for the first time. The number of Catholics in the House of Representatives has increased by four. This included one Republican and one Democrat who are non-voting representatives. Overall the number of Catholic Democrats declined from 73 to 72 and the number of Catholic Republicans increased from 53 to 58.

¹⁷ See Dolan, *op. cit.*

¹⁸ For Faithful Citizenship see United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, <http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/bishopStatement.html>

¹⁹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding The Participation of Catholics in Political Life," November 22, 2002 http://www.vaican.va/roman_curia.congregations/cfaith/documents

The Bishops' statement was based in their emphasis on the "life and dignity of the human person" and the need for what should be part of the national debate was "the protection of human life". This included the protection of innocent life as well as "the intentional targeting of civilians in war or terrorist attacks"; "the preemptive or preventive use of force"; as well as opposition to the death penalty.²⁰ This "formidable agenda" was also concerned with the promotion of the human family, the pursuit of social justice and the practice of global solidarity.²¹

The major problem for all Catholic politicians and voters both Democratic and Republican is that if they adhered loyally to the policies outlined in the documents they would be as the bishops themselves acknowledged "politically homeless." There would be the bishops indicated no political party that would share what they described as "consistent concern for human life and dignity." The bishops' argument in their document is that since all "human beings are created in the image of God all life from conception until natural death and in every condition" is to be protected. But the arguments they use to condemn abortion and euthanasia are the same that they use to condemn all other "unjustifiable assault[s] on human life." The right to life that is so identified with opposition to abortion and euthanasia is used by the bishops to oppose war. "Nations" they wrote "must protect the right to life by finding ever more effective ways to prevent conflicts from arising, to resolve them by peaceful means and to promote post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation". They also indicated their strong opposition to the death penalty which is part of their "pro-life commitment." They "encourage[d] solutions to violent crime that reflect the dignity of the human person, urging our nation to abandon the use of capital punishment."²²

Based on this outline of the issues that are important to the Bishops much of their policy would place them to the left of the platform of the Democratic Party with the exception of one major set of significant policy issues: abortion, euthanasia, stem-cell research and same sex marriages. It is moreover these set of issues that have become the litmus test for what is defined by more right wing and fundamentalist groups in the United States as the culture of life (pro-life on abortion issues) and the culture of death (pro-choice on abortion issues).

The major political and social conflict for the bishops is created by the majority of American Democratic Catholic politicians who from the 1970s onwards have claimed that while they may be opposed to abortion on a personal level they cannot impose their private views on their public roles as legislators. This is clearly an invocation of the position adopted by John Kennedy in 1960. Yet on most other issues they fit into the traditional Catholic social teaching on society. On the other hand most Republican candidates and politicians' position on the issues that fall under the rubric of Catholic social teaching are strongly negative except of course for the issues of abortion and euthanasia and family values, issues including opposition to same sex marriage.

²⁰ Quotes from document [Faithful Citizenship](#)

²¹ Editorial, "Catholics and Politics, 2004," [America](#), May 24, 2004

²² Quotes from document [Faithful Citizenship](#)

Abortion was in a category by itself. It was from the Bishops' perspective contrary to natural law since the unborn child was completely innocent and it was always wrong to take an innocent life. It was also contrary they argued to basic human rights since all human persons have the inalienable right to life. That those who supported abortion laws and supported the pro-choice position denied this completely made any kind of discussion difficult since it was a classic zero sum game and neither side could give in without denying the legality of their position. The fact that most Americans did not agree with either side only made it more difficult. This was especially true for the Bishops since a large number of Catholics fell into the group who might have felt that Roe v. Wade was too liberal but did not reject the idea of some form of limited abortion especially in the first trimester.

Moreover, the bishops' argument is that since human beings are created in the image of God all life from conception until natural death and in every condition" is to be protected. But what is important and indicates the conflict that would be true for both American political parties is that the arguments used to condemn abortion and euthanasia are the same that are used to condemn all other "unjustifiable assault[s] on human life." The right to life that is so identified with the pro-life movement is used by the bishops to oppose war ("Nations must protect the right to life by finding ever more effective ways to prevent conflicts from arising, to resolve them by peaceful means and to promote post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation") as well as opposition to the death penalty which they state is part of "our pro-life commitment, [and] we encourage solutions to violent crime that reflect the dignity of the human person, urging our nation to abandon the use of capital punishment."²³

As indicated above Catholics had been condemned and rebuked for their position on abortion in the past but not before the 2004 round of elections had a Catholic politician been threatened with denial of the sacraments or informed that they could no longer be truly called Catholics. There had been some indication in 2003 that the bishops were beginning to get tougher with Catholic politicians who had pro choice voting records. Then both Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (Democrat from South Dakota) and Democratic Governor Grey Davis of California had been admonished by their bishops not to call themselves Catholics or to present themselves to receive Communion during Mass.²⁴ In 2003 the new Archbishop of Boston had warned Catholic politicians in that state (which included Senator John Kerry) that if they did not support the Church's position on abortion that they would be better not to try and receive the Eucharist at Mass.²⁵

This was reinforced by Raymond Burke shortly after he was installed as Archbishop of St. Louis when he indicated that he would support O'Malley's public position and refuse

²³ Quotes from document Faithful Citizenship

²⁴ But the pro-choice positions of Daschle and Davis had not played a role in their defeat. Daschle was targeted by Republicans because he had been Senate Majority Leader and Davis was replaced after his loss in the recall vote in California by Arnold Schwarzenegger a Republican who is pro-choice.

²⁵ Andrew Walsh,, "Kerry Eucharistes," Religion in the News, Summer 2004, vol. 7, no. 2, <http://www.trincoll.edu/depts/csrpl/RINVOL7No2/KerryEucharistes.htm>

the sacrament to Catholic politicians.²⁶ Furthermore he singled out John Kerry by name stating that if he attended Mass in the Archdiocese he would be denied the Eucharist. The press began to follow Kerry's movements on Sunday morning more closely and it became a dominant story as the controversy between Kerry and the Bishops escalated.

The issue of whether or not bishops could order ministers of the Eucharist to deny the sacrament to politicians (and more specifically John Kerry) led to a great deal of controversy and even more inflammatory language in the secular and religious press. The literature on this subject is already enormous, even though most of it is also repetitive and more shrill than enlightening as both opponents and supporters of John Kerry made their views known if not always clearly known. One place where both sides of the issue were given a hearing was in America, a weekly Jesuit newsmagazine.²⁷

In one editorial in the America, Thomas J. Reese, the editor set out some of the reasons he thought the bishops' position was worrisome. He felt that such a position was "pastorally offensive and politically inept." Moreover it would turn what ought to be from his viewpoint a human rights issue into a denominational issue. While he agreed with the bishops about the sanctity of human life and opposition to abortion he also indicated that to some extent Catholic politicians needed to be given some benefit of the doubt and that "Legislators who believe that abortion is immoral may, rightly or wrongly, decide that legalized abortion is the least of several possible evils in a pluralistic society."²⁸

Within the Catholic community there was a great deal of conflict and even disagreement about the importance of various issues. For many the issues of abortion and euthanasia and the taking of innocent life was preeminent. For others while these issues remained at the forefront, other issues including the war in Iraq were more important. Kerry's position on abortion and whether he would be allowed to receive the Eucharist at times took over the campaign and put Kerry on the defensive.

The Kerry campaign seems to have made two miscalculations on the issue of Kerry's own Catholicism. First was the way in which Kerry enunciated his own faith and second was the failure of the campaign to reach out to Catholics groups who even if pro-life may have been persuaded by other aspects of the campaign that included many aspects of both the culture of life other issues such as war and poverty.

The anecdotal evidence indicates that Kerry did not enunciate his own faith in ways that were convincing to the electorate. John Podesta, a Roman Catholic and former Chief of Staff for President Bill Clinton and now with the Center for American Progress in an interview indicated what would prove to be one of John Kerry's major problems: "I think the challenge that President Kennedy, then Senator Kennedy, was under was one in

²⁶ See Raymond L. Burke, "Catholic Politicians and bishops," America, June 21-28, 2004.

²⁷ That the balance given in the magazine was not always appreciated by the Vatican was seen in the recent resignation of the editor Thomas J. Reese, S. J., under pressure from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its then Head, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

²⁸ Editorial, "Catholics and Politics 2004, op. cit.," see also "Discussion of the Body Politic and the Body of Christ: Candidates, Communion and the Catholic Church" with Thomas J. Reese, S. J. and George Wiegel, moderator Luis Lugo, Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, June 23, 2004.

which he was being challenged on how he would govern. Senator Kerry is being challenged on whether he really, truly has faith.” He went on to point out that “The American public wants to know what’s in your core, what makes you tick, what’s your moral dimension that you’re going to bring to bear on important public issues. They want to know when you close the door in the Oval Office, you know, [and] what values do you bring to the table?”²⁹

This is a point reinforced by the interviewer Kim Lawton who indicates the degree to which Kerry not only did not try and build on a Catholic base but seems to have gone out of his way to ignore it. As she points out the Kerry-Edwards campaign seemed to have had major problems with issues of faith. “Kerry says he doesn’t like to wear his religion on his sleeve. On the campaign trail, he hadn’t emphasized his Catholic identity, and has not spoken before Catholic groups.’ This was quite evident she points out in Ohio, a state that many thought he would take, but in the end would prove crucial to the victory of George Bush. She points out that the organizers for the Democratic Party were “frustrated that the people organizing the Kerry campaign haven’t done more direct outreach to Catholic voters.” On the other hand the Bush campaign was making direct overtures to the Catholic voters. For example, George Bush made appearances at meetings of the Knights of Columbus, the major Catholic men’s organization but John Kerry did not.

While it is true that George Bush’s position on most issues of life were and are at odds with the Catholic Church the Republican Party campaign was able to use the issues of abortion, euthanasia and same sex marriage to appeal to Catholics and to embrace the “culture of life” which was first set out by Pope John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* in 1995.

So why in the 2004 presidential election did the bishops attack John Kerry directly? Four reasons have been put forward to explain their more direct behaviour. The first is that the Bishops as well as many traditionalist commentators seemed frustrated by Kerry’s voting record on abortion which had received rankings of 100% by leading pro-choice groups in the United States. This combined with his public inarticulateness about his own faith led many of them to question the degree to which he really did espouse Catholic values.³⁰

The second reason was that many of the most outspoken bishops belong to a younger cohort and had been appointed to the episcopacy after 1995. They were sometimes referred to as JPII’s bishops. Collectively they were more conservative than the older group of bishops. Ironically it could be argued that they were products of Vatican II and the increased emphasis on a Public Catholicism that had earlier engaged their more modern lay and clerical fellow Catholics. They were more confrontational and less conciliatory in their approach to what they saw as wayward Catholic politicians than

²⁹ Catholic Voters, Religion and Ethics News Weekly, October 8, 2004
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week806/cover.html>

³⁰ See this opposition to Kerry’s expression of his faith is seen in an editorial by Richard John Neuhaus in *First Things*, August/September 2004

some of their predecessors such as Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Archbishop of Chicago who had played a major role in the development of the bishops' public face on issues of life in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these bishops' view of the Church was more exclusive and reflected the position adopted in the Declaration "Dominus Iesus (The Lord Jesus) on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church issued by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith August 6, 2000³¹ and approved by then Cardinal Ratzinger that Jesus Christ is the only true way to salvation and that this can be achieved through the Catholic Church. This was reinforced by some of them including Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Denver that true Catholics are those who having reflected on the church's position on moral issues accept the teachings of the Church as laid down by the Vatican and the Bishops.³²

A third reason put forward for the bishops' stance was the need for them to reestablish their own moral authority within the Catholic Community. The long simmering scandal that had broken into the national press in 2002 regarding the priests accused of pedophilia and pederasty, and even more importantly the cover-up by members of the hierarchy had done tremendous damage to the bishops. There was not only the sense that the bishops were more concerned with protecting guilty priests than they were in protecting children and that they had betrayed community after community by moving these priests from parish to parish. Moreover the cover-up was costing the church millions of dollars which even while some of it was raised through selling church property ultimately came from lay Catholics through the Sunday collection plate.

Moreover this was one scandal that Catholics of all descriptions traditionalist, centrist and modern could agree on. They might disagree on the appropriate solution but all of them agreed that it demonstrated unwillingness by the bishops to take responsibility.³³ The issue was not helped when it became apparent that Bernard Cardinal Law Archbishop of Boston and one of the most important archdioceses in the country had been involved in the biggest cover up and pay out to families and individuals. The attempt by the bishops to deal with the problem at their bi-annual meeting in Dallas in 2002 had been a disaster. They had finally set up a National Review Board composed of lay people (a first for the Church) to examine the process. In the spring of 2004 the NRB had reported with a devastating critique of the bishops' individual and collective behaviour.³⁴ The bishops needed to reestablish a moral high ground and the candidacy of John Kerry provided them with an opportunity.

³¹ Declaration "Dominus Iesus (The Lord Jesus) on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church" issued by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith August 6, 2000

³² "Denver Archbishop says those who Support Abortion "Rights" Cannot be Catholic." July 14, 2004
<http://www.lifesite.net/Idn/2004/jul/04071402.htm>

³³ The crisis that developed out of this growing scandal culminated in a series of charges and the clear inability of the Catholic bishops to deal with the problems. For a critical review of the Bishops but that is supportive of a conservative reform of the church see George Wiegel, The Courage to be Catholic, New York: Basic Books, 2002. See also David Gibson, The Coming Catholic Church: How the Faithful Are Shaping a New American Catholicism, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003 for a more liberal critique of the Bishops' behaviour. See also Thomas J. Reese, S. J., "The Impact of the Sexual Abuse Crisis," in Oakley and Russett, *op. cit.*

³⁴ For the report entitled A Report on the Crisis in the Catholic Church in the United States see at
<http://www.usccb.org/nrb/nrbstudy/nrbreport.pdf>

The fourth reason was the issuing of the doctrinal note issued in 2002 on Catholics in public life. This document A Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life put out by the Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith has already been referred to. It made it clear that the bishops as teachers and leaders of the Catholic community had a duty “to instruct and illuminate the consciences of the faithful, particularly those involved in political life, so that their actions may always serve the integral promotion of the human person and the common good.”

Not all bishops felt that a public confrontation with the Democratic presidential candidate over his access to the Eucharist was called for. In order to resolve the problem the bishops set up a Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians that was discussed at the Bishops Spring Meeting in Denver Colorado June 2004.³⁵ The question for the bishops was whether Catholic politicians who supported laws allowing abortion could be declared no longer Catholics in good standing and that bishops and priests could deny these individuals the sacraments, more specifically the reception of the Eucharist at mass.³⁶

The politicians themselves responded in a letter from 48 Catholic Members of Congress. The issue for the politicians was that while they may have a voting record that indicates a support for abortion they have also a voting record that indicates that they have a record of promoting and supporting “human dignity in many sectors.”³⁷ In a critique of the Members of Congress letter, Archbishop William J. Levada set out the framework of the bishops’ position on the moral as opposed to the doctrinal framework of Catholicism.³⁸ The bishops acknowledge that they have no right to expect any law to support doctrines of Catholic belief. But Levada goes on to argue that the moral basis on which the pro-life argument is developed derives from a moral law that is based on “fundamental and inalienable ethical demands”

But he points out that while differences may exist over a whole range of issues including war and the death penalty but goes on to state: “Catholic social teaching covers a broad range of important issues. But among these the teaching on abortion holds a unique place. Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia. . . .

For critiques of the report see Editorials by Richard John Neuhaus, First Things, May, 2004; June/July 2004; for an interview with the chair of the National Review Board see “Interview with Judge Anne M. Burke, U. S. Catholic, January 2005.

³⁵ See Interim Reflections of the Task Force on Catholic Bishops and Catholic Politicians, June 15, 2004 <http://www.usccb.org/bishops/taskforce.shtml>

³⁶ In a piece in the New York Times on May 28, 2004 by Kenneth Woodward set out the issue before the Bishops and their task force: “The point of contention is whether Catholic politicians . . . can claim to be Catholics in good standing, and therefore worthy of the Eucharist, while vigorously pursuing a policy of ‘choice’ that is tantamount to unrestricted abortion.”

³⁷ “On Denying Communion as a Sanction: Letter to a Cardinal,” see at http://www.catholicculture.org/docs/doc_view.cfm?recnum=60616

³⁸ See William J. Levada, “Reflections on Catholics in Public Life and the Reception of Holy Communion,” <http://www.nccbuscc.org/bishops/reflection.htm> In May 2005 Pope Benedict XVI appointed Archbishop Levada of San Francisco as his successor as Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.

While the Church exhorts civil authorities to seek peace, not war, and to exercise discretion and mercy in imposing punishment on criminals, it may still be permissible to take up arms to repel an aggressor or to have recourse to capital punishment. There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not with regard to abortion and euthanasia.”

Yet in the end Archbishop Levada and the members of the Task Force equivocated at the June meeting on whether or not they should make a public statement on excluding Catholic politicians who voted in favour of legislation that supported abortion from receiving the sacraments.³⁹ They agreed to issue a final statement on the issue in mid November when the election would be safely over. However, Archbishop Chaput of Denver did state a few days before the November election that any Catholic who voted for John Kerry was committing a serious sin. In voting for Kerry he declared a voter was “cooperating in evil” and therefore would have to go to confession before receiving the Eucharist.⁴⁰

In the end the conflicts in the presidential campaign moved on to centre on other things, although statements by the Bishops on the issue of abortion and Catholic politicians continued to be made throughout the campaign. Other issues became important in the campaign. One did not have to anti-abortion or anti-Catholic to decide not to vote for Kerry. While the aftermath of the election showed that Catholics had voted more for Bush than for Kerry and there was much fuss about red and blue states, Kerry lost the election just as much on moral issues as on issues related to security and defense.

PART THREE - CATHOLIC VOTERS AND THE 2004 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

“There is No “Catholic Vote,” And Yet, It Matters,”⁴¹ Dionne points out in this article that Catholics, the single largest bloc of voters in the United States, have only once voted en masse and that was in the 1960 Presidential Election in which the only Catholic, John F. Kennedy, to win the Presidency was the Democratic candidate. The problem in 2002 (and it was again in 2004) was that whether Catholics are liberals or conservatives,

³⁹ There does seem to be some confusion on the part of the Bishops on whether or not they would have the support of the Vatican on denying sacraments to Catholic politicians. Cardinal McCarrick indicated that he had received a letter from Cardinal Ratzinger. He did not show the letter to the bishops but did indicate that Cardinal Ratzinger had not taken a firm stand on this issue. However the letter was later leaked by an Italian newspaper and the letter indicated in very strong language Ratzinger’s support for denying politicians in this case the sacraments. See Neuhaus, First Things, October 2004

⁴⁰ See response to this by Bill Press, “Catholic Bishops declare war on John Kerry,” WorldNetDaily, October 22, 2004 <http://worldnetdaily.com/news/> provides an equally strong statement rejecting the bishops stand as being at best selective. He writes: “Archbishop Chaput, of course, applies a very selective test. It’s as in to vote for Kerry, he says, because Kerry supports a woman’s right of choice and embryonic stem-cell research, both of which the Catholic Church opposes. Yet it’s not a sin to vote for Bush, who supports the death penalty and the war in Iraq - which the church also opposes. Who gave Chaput the power to decide which issues count and which ones don’t?”

⁴¹ E. J. Dionne, Jr., Washington Post, June 18, 2000; see also Stephen Mockabee, Religion and Realignment: The Catholic Vote in American Elections,” Paper given at the American Political Science Association Meetings, September 2004

Republicans or Democrats, when they cast their ballots it is likely to be for a candidate or a party that at some level disagrees with some aspect of Catholic social teaching.

Dionne goes on to state that “Catholics who are liberal Democrats are more inclined to oppose abortion than other sorts of liberals. Catholics who are conservative Republicans value tradition and community and not just the free market. And Catholics who support the death penalty know how strongly their bishop and their pope oppose it. Being a Catholic liberal or a Catholic conservative inevitably means having a bad conscience about something.”

For most Catholics the face of the Church is their local parish and their parish priest. Even though a small number of priests were involved, this perhaps explains the sense of betrayal the average Catholic feels about the sexual scandals. It is perhaps also why many bishops failed to understand the laity’s response because for most bishops who they see the most of in the diocese they run are the priests. But the relationship between a bishop and a priest is much different than the relationship between a priest and a parishioner. If anyone is likely to influence a Catholic voter it is more likely to be the local parish priest.⁴²

But as the data indicates Catholic voters are not a monolith or a block of votes that can be delivered to any party or candidate, even by a bishop or parish priest. First in the United States they are initially defined into two broad groups: white ethnic and Hispanic. But within each of these groups there are further divisions. White ethnic voters are descendants of European immigrants - Irish, German, Poles, Italians, Portuguese and French Canadians. Hispanic voters are descendants of more recent immigrants - Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans and Central Americans. The issues important to all of these groups may and probably will differ based on geography, race, gender, age, class, historical experiences of the group and other issues as well.

There are two factors that Dionne indicates influence the way in which Catholics vote: social justice and social renewal. These might also be classified by the references above to the papal encyclicals. The degree to which one or the other is more important might well influence the way in which they do vote. The difficulty is that in no recent Presidential election there was no candidate who spoke out in favour of both of these topics. For the point of comparison at this point one could argue that in 2004, George Bush and the Republicans favoured the position of social renewal and that John Kerry and the Democrats favoured the position associated with social justice.

Later analysis of the 2004 vote indicates that the issue of national security and the war on terrorism was perhaps more significant than the first data based on what turned out to be a “flawed exit poll” in the aftermath of the election might have indicated.⁴³ But the data

⁴² See Gregory Smith, “The Influence of Priests on the Political Attitudes of Catholics,” Paper presented at the American Political Science Association meetings, September, 2004. Interestingly the data indicates that the more liberal the parish priest the more likely he is to be influential on his parishioners.

⁴³ See D. Sunshine Hillygus and Todd G. Shields, “Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election,” PS: Political Science and Politics, April 2005, Vol. XXXVIII (2) 201-209

available from the Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics conducted first in March-May with a post election follow-up in November and December 2004 by the Bliss Institute at the University of Akron for the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life indicates the complexity of how individuals vote and the relationship between their religious views and their political views.⁴⁴

The breakdown of the Catholic vote based on the Pew supported survey indicates that George Bush won a slim majority of Non-Latino Catholics at 53 percent, with a turnout of 67 percent of Catholics. The survey divides non-Latino Catholics into three groups: traditionalist, centrist and modernist. The data indicates that Traditionalist Catholics strongly preferred Bush with 72 percent, with a turnout of 77 percent, and Centrist Catholics supported the President with 55 percent, with a turnout of 58 percent. On the other hand, Modernist Catholics strongly supported Kerry, with 69 percent, and a turnout of 70 percent.⁴⁵ Latino Catholics were not divided into further groups. They voted solidly for Kerry with 60 percent voting in favour but with a lower turnout of 43 percent.⁴⁶ (Table 1) Among the groups who gave more than three quarters of their votes to Bush were traditionalist Catholics at 72 percent while more than half of centrist Catholics voted for Bush. No Catholic groups gave more than three quarters of their votes to Kerry although two groups gave 69%: modernist Catholics and Latino Catholics. (Table 2). Yet among Catholic voters asked about the importance of social, foreign policy and economic issues only a majority traditional Catholics indicated that these were very important and a majority of modernist and economic Catholics felt that economic issues were important. But all Catholic groups felt that foreign policy issues were important. (Table 3)

So what role if any did Kerry's stance on abortion affect the vote that he did receive? As several commentators have indicated the Catholic vote has become a swing vote. In every election since 1972 the majority of the popular vote cast by Catholics has gone to the popular winner of the presidency (In 2000 they voted approximately 50 to 47% for Al Gore). Since 1972 the Democratic Party has supported abortion rights but in 1976, 1992, 1996 and 2000 Catholics gave a majority of their votes to the Democratic candidate.

⁴⁴ See Fourth National Survey on Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute, University of Akron, March-May 2004 (N=4000) (see <http://pewforum.org/publications/surveys/green.pdf>) Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute, University of Akron, Post-Election Sample, November-December 2004, (N=2730). (see <http://pewforum.org/publications/surveys/postelection.pdf>) The Tables at the end of this paper are from these two surveys with appropriate attribution.

⁴⁵ The division of traditional, centrist, and modernist Catholics took into account answers to questions relating to belief in God and an afterlife, views on the Bible and evolution, belief in the existence of the devil, and the truth of other religions; it also took into account the significance of religious behaviour including frequency of religious attendance, financial support, importance of private prayer and scripture reading and participation in small Christian groups. Another factor was the salience of religion in public decision making. On the other hand modernists were those who also defined themselves as liberal, progressive, ecumenical, and felt that Catholicism had to make some adjustments to the modern world. The Latino sample was too small to further divide into traditional, centrist and modernist. While there are Catholics who are African-American and Asian-American the numbers were too small to be included.

⁴⁶ There are tables included at the end of this paper. Table I provides the breakdown of the overall vote in 2004 by religious affiliation and Table 2 organizes it along the lines of most support for Bush and for Kerry.

Moreover polls indicate that the views on Catholics are not radically different from the majority of the population. In senatorial elections in Massachusetts Kerry took 53 percent of the 50 percent of Catholics who make up the Massachusetts electorate. In the Super Tuesday primaries Kerry took 62 percent of the Catholic votes according to the CBS News exit polls. In the 2000 presidential election 55 percent of Catholic voters indicated that they supported abortion “remaining either mostly or entirely legal” which is about the same as the general public. In a May 2004 CBS News/New York Times poll 64 percent of Catholics indicated support for gay marriage or civil unions which was 10 percent higher than the general American public.⁴⁷

The support for Catholic voters for stem-cell research, the death penalty, abortion, as well as same-sex marriages indicate that their views are as complex and diverse as those of the American public. On the issue of abortion the views of Catholics across the spectrum are not much different than those of other Americans with 13% (15% for general public) opposed to abortion in all circumstances and 35% (same as the general public) supportive of abortion in all circumstances. None of the groups within the Catholic sample were completely opposed to abortion in all circumstances. Among traditionalist Catholics about a quarter opposed it in all circumstances but half (51%) favoured it in limited circumstances.

This is especially significant on an issue like abortion given its significance as a litmus test for support of Catholic values by Catholic politicians. On the question of whether it should be possible for women to obtain a legal abortion for any reason 38 percent of Catholics indicated support while 43 percent of the general public indicated support. The percentage of Catholics who believe that homosexuality is not wrong at all stood at 39% while in the general population it stood at 33%.

The evidence is that the partisan divisions over abortion have not changed that much since the early 1990s. Even if the issue seems more divisive in political terms the divisions along political and religious lines do not seem to have changed much over the past decade. (Table 9) The largest group supporting stricter abortion laws remains white evangelicals. White Catholics were almost evenly split over this issue in 1987, (46% in favour and 48 % opposed) but by 2003 the number opposed to stricter laws had risen to 56% and those in favour had fallen to 37%. The numbers among white evangelicals are almost the exact reverse in 2003 with 58% in favour of stricter laws and 36% opposed.

On issues of stem cell research a slim majority of Catholics were opposed to a complete ban with about a third in favour of a ban on this type of research. 32% were in favour of a ban on stem cell research, but 51% were in favour of stem cell research, although about one third of centrist and Latino Catholics opposed stem cell research as well. The strongest supporters of research were modernist Catholics at 71%.

⁴⁷ Monika McDermott, “Can Kerry Carry The Catholic Vote?” May 24, 2004, CBSNEWS.com (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/21/politics>)

Similar divisions existed among Catholics on the death penalty. The bishops in their statements on public policy had expressed opposition to the death penalty. But 51% of Catholics indicated their support of the death penalty. The only groups whose support fell below 50% were traditionalist Catholics at 45% and Latino Catholics at 42%.

On gay rights 57% of Americans indicated their support for gay rights. Among Catholics this number was higher at 64% ranging from 51% among traditional Catholics to over 83% among modernist Catholics. On the issue of whether there should be same sex marriages only modernist Catholics supported this by more than half and that was at 51%. Overall Catholics were supportive of traditional marriages (48%), slightly below the number for the entire sample at 55%.

At the same time like other religious groups they feel that it is important the political leaders, including the President indicate their own religious views. The entire sample indicated that 70% of Catholics were supportive of the president having strong religious beliefs and 60% felt comfortable with candidates discussing their own religious beliefs. All groups of Catholics indicated that they felt that organized religious groups should stand up for their religious beliefs but they were evenly split on whether these groups should intervene politically, which ought to have given the bishops some pause for thought. Yet here again there were divisions within the groups of Catholics, with traditionalists and Latino Catholics supportive of intervention than centrist and modernist Catholics. At the same time they indicate that in many instances their own religious views are not always the most significant factor in determining how they vote themselves.

PART FOUR - WHAT IMPACT DID THE BISHOPS ACTUALLY HAVE ON THE ELECTION?

While there are many implications that can be read into the results of the 2004 Presidential election there are two that I would like to concentrate on here. The first set of issues deal with the response by the Democratic Party and Christian social activists on the left. The second set of issues deal with what the confrontation by the Bishops with John Kerry might indicate about American Catholic Church and its future role in American politics.

There is no doubt that one of the messages that the Democratic Party took away from the election is that if they are to regain the centre of American politics and break the stranglehold of the Republican Party on Congress and the Presidency they will have to make some adjustments in their message. One area where it is clear that they needed to develop a more complex message was on the issue of abortion and other life issues. Democratic politicians who were pro-life had been pushed to the side-lines. However, they have begun to be more prominent. One clear indication of this is the choice of Senator Harry Reid of Nevada a pro-life Democrat to succeed Senator Tom Daschle of South Dakota a pro-choice Democrat as Senate Minority Leader.

Other supporters of the Democratic Party have begun to develop organizations that reinforce the connection between the traditional teachings of social justice of the Catholic Church and the Democratic Party. One such organization is the Center for American Progress headed by John Podesta, former Chief of Staff to President Bill Clinton.⁴⁸ There has also been an increase recognition that the left of the religious spectrum has to make clearer its position on the broad spectrum of issues important for Christians including social justice and a respect as well for life, including that of unborn children.⁴⁹

The shift in the response to the issue of values and popular vote by the Democratic Party has less to do with the positions adopted by the Catholic bishops than to broader issues in American politics. But this does not mean that the intervention of the Catholic bishops is unimportant for long term developments both in American politics and American society.

The data from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life indicated that the views of Catholics on a whole range of social, economic and foreign policy issues are far from monolithic. Even though a small percentage did vote in favour of the Republican candidate George Bush, nearly half also voted for John Kerry. If social revival issues (including abortion and family values) are more important to traditional and centrist Catholics, social justice issues (the economy) appear to be more important for modernist and Latino Catholics.

The data indicates that few people, including Catholics, vote on single issues. We do not have data that would tell us if those Catholics who voted for Al Gore in 2000, voted for George Bush in 2004. Therefore we cannot conclude that if the increased number of Catholic votes for George Bush were voters who switched because of the bishops' views on Kerry. At the same time we cannot conclude that they might have switched because of their own views on Kerry which found him less trustworthy than Bush on either social revival issues or on security issues. We do know that more overall voters trusted Bush on security and at this point we can at least conclude that some Catholic voters were probably within that group.

So why did the Bishops expend such moral capital on this particular issue? This phrase is deliberate and it is perhaps the key to the bishops' intervention into the presidential campaign. The behaviour of the bishops over the scandal of priests accused of pedophilia and even more of pederasty brought condemnation from Catholics across the political and religious spectrum. In their response to the crisis the laity disagreed both to its cause and to its solution. For conservatives the scandal indicated that the bishops had betrayed their own leadership role as moral authorities. This was seen in many ways but two were emphasized. Because of a shortage of priests they had turned a blind eye to certain kinds of behaviour including that of homosexuality among priests. The second was that they had not been as tough as they should have been

⁴⁸ A Discussion "Faith, Politics and progressives: A Conversation with John Podesta," Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Moderator Luis Logo, April 26, 2005

⁴⁹ The most important work in this area is not by a Catholic but by an evangelical, Jim Wallis the editor of *Sojourners*. See Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

on Catholics, particularly Catholic politicians who did not follow church teachings on the most intrinsically of all evils – the taking of innocent human life in abortion.

For more liberal Catholics the crisis created by the sexual scandals demonstrated something quite different. It was an indication that the bishops did not understand the concerns and problems of the laity. For bishops it was a pastoral problem and the priests involved needed help with their problem. This is true whether they thought what the priests had done was a sign of moral or psychological weakness. In either case it was a situation in which the bishops felt that the priest needed help and understanding. Furthermore in either case it often meant little or no understanding or even sympathy for the victims and their families. These were seen as a problem that needed to be silenced usually by being paid off through diocesan funds, which had of course originated in the Sunday collection plate. If that did not work and since they saw the problem of dealing with the priests' behaviours as falling under canon law and not under civil/criminal law they attempted to stonewall the civil authorities.

There were also disagreements on how to resolve the crisis. For liberals the problem was perceived also as a failure on the part of the bishops to provide moral leadership. But rather than attempting to modify the top down model of authority that the conservatives argued for they instead argued that the problem was because the church failed to seek openness and adopt a bottom up model of collegiality. While conservatives felt that reform would mean a tighter control over moral and social beliefs liberals felt that more openness was required. But there is no doubt that the Democratic party home to a leftist interpretation of America society that often made liberal Catholics uncomfortable had failed to grasp the importance of values as well as issues of security among the American people.

Conservatives indicated that if the bishops were to overcome this crisis they would have to introduce a series of reforms within the organization of the church but they would also have to reaffirm their role as teachers and spiritual leaders of the clergy and the laity. For Catholics in public life this meant that they would be expected to follow the positions on social and moral issues as laid down by the Catholic Church. And while there could be disagreements about some issues there was not a “seamless web” of moral issues but a hierarchy of moral issues. There could be disagreement about capital punishment and war but not about the taking of human life at its beginning or end: abortion and euthanasia.⁵⁰ From the bishops' perspective the position of John Kerry as a presidential candidate who was a Catholic with a voting record in favour of pro-choice proposals throughout his career could not go unchallenged.

It did not help that in many ways Kerry was often inarticulate about what his faith did mean to him. While some liberal groups within the Catholic community did come to his

⁵⁰ The seamless web of life issues had been adopted by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Chicago in the 1980s who had been a principal spokesman of the National Bishops' Council. Conservatives had disagreed and supported a more hierarchical view of life issues with abortion and euthanasia at the top and non-negotiable while other life issues such as the death penalty and war were at a lower ranking. The hierarchy of issues had the support of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

support the problem for Kerry was his inability to rise above the other issues that were raised about his moral centre. Kerry was never able to convince people of the depth of his beliefs.

In many ways it is perhaps unfortunate that he was unable to articulate the problem in a way that other pro-choice Catholic Democrats had done in the past. It might not have influenced the more conservative Catholics but it might have reassured others who had concerns about him as well on the question of a moral centre. The problem for John Kerry was that the bishops had to be seen to be active in establishing their moral authority. The issue of abortion and euthanasia was one on which he was extremely vulnerable within both the Catholic and the Evangelical communities at the same time he proved vulnerable on the security issue within a larger American community.

Table I. The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Two-Party Presidential Vote (arranged by Religious Tradition)

	Vote Choice*		Turnout*
	Bush	Kerry	
ALL EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT	78	22 = 100%	63%
Traditionalist Evangelical Protestant	88	12	69%
Centrist Evangelical Protestant	64	36	52%
Modernist Evangelical Protestant	48	52	65%
ALL MAINLINE PROTESTANT	50	50	69%
Traditionalist Mainline Protestant	68	32	78%
Centrist Mainline Protestant	58	42	68%
Modernist Mainline Protestant	22	78	71%
Latino Protestant	63	37	49%
Black Protestant	17	83	50%
ALL NON-LATINO CATHOLIC	53	47	67%
Traditionalist Catholic	72	28	77%
Centrist Catholic	55	45	58%
Modernist Catholic	31	69	70%
Latino Catholic	31	69	43%
Other Christians	80	20	60%
Other Faiths	23	77	62%
Jews	27	73	87%
ALL UNAFFILIATED	28	72	52%
Unaffiliated Believers	37	63	39%
Seculars	30	70	55%
Atheists, Agnostics	18	82	61%
ENTIRE ELECTORATE	51	49 =100%	60.8%

* Vote choice and turnout weighted to reflect actual election results. Unweighted results show very similar patterns.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Post-Election Sample (N=2730, November-December 2004, University of Akron)

Table 2. The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Party Coalitions

	Bush	Kerry	All
Traditionalist Evangelical Protestant	27%	4%	15%
Other Christians	4	1	3
Traditional Catholic	8	3	6
Traditional Mainline Protestant	8	4	6
Centrist Evangelical Protestant	11	7	9
Latino Protestant	3	2	2
Centrist Mainline Protestant	9	7	8
Centrist Catholic	8	6	7
Modernist Evangelical Protestant	2	3	2
Unaffiliated Believers	2	4	3
Latino Catholic	2	4	3
Modernist Catholic	4	9	6
Secular	4	10	7
Jews	1	4	3
Other Faiths	1	4	2
Modernist Mainline Protestant	2	9	6
Atheists, Agnostics	1	6	4
Black Protestants	3	13	8
ENTIRE ELECTORATE	100%	100%	100%

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Post-Election Sample (N=2730, November-December 2004, University of Akron)
 (Appeared as Table 3 in John C. Green et al., "The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Presidential Vote: Increased Polarization.")

Table 3. The American Religious Landscape, Issues and the 2004 Presidential Vote

	Social Issues		Foreign Policy		Economic Issues	
	Important		Important		Important	
	%Very	%Most	%Very	%Most	%Very	%Most
ALL NON LATINO CATHOLIC	39	19	81	40	56	34
Traditional Catholic	68	39	81	31	49	23
Centrist Catholic	24	10	80	42	54	41
Modernist Catholic	31	11	82	46	65	36
Latino Catholic	40	21	74	26	71	44

*Neither the columns nor the rows add to 100% because some categories have been excluded, such as respondents who said an issue was "somewhat" or "not important" or respondents who gave top priority to other issues.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Post-Election Sample (N=2730, November-December 2004, University of Akron)
 (Appeared as part of Table 5 in John C. Green et al., The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Presidential Vote: Increased Polarization)

Table 4. The American Religious Landscape and the Role of Faith in 2004 Presidential Vote

	COMPARED TO OTHER FACTORS			
	Faith More Important	Faith About as Important	Faith Less Important	Faith Not Important
ALL NON LATINO CATHOLIC	11	27	21	41 = 100%
Traditionalist Catholic	32	43	10	15
Centrist Catholic	5	26	23	46
Modernist Catholic	3	18	27	52
Latino Catholic	19	20	15	46

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Post-Election Sample (N=2730, November-December 2004, University of Akron)
 (Appeared as part of Table 6 in John C. Green et al., The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Presidential Vote: Increased Polarization)

Table 5. Defining the Religious Landscape: Measures of Religion

	Worship Attendance			View of God			View of Tradition		
	Regular	Often	Rarely	Personal	Impersonal	Unsure	Preserve	Adapt	Adopt
Catholic									
Traditionalist Catholic	87%	11	2	56	44	0	65	32	3
Centrist Catholic	45	36	20	34	59	7	29	55	16
Modernist Catholic	21	49	30	4	56	40	3	66	31
Latino Catholic	47	41	12	35	55	10	44	31	25

Legend: Worship attendance: “regular”: week or more; “often”: 1-2 a month; few times a year; “rarely”: seldom or never
 View of God: “Personal”: God is a person; “Impersonal”: God is a spirit or force; “Unsure”: not sure or doesn’t believe in God;
 View of Tradition: “Preserve”: strive to preserve beliefs/practices; “Adapt”: strive to adapt beliefs/practices to new times; “Adopt”: strive to adopt new beliefs/practices;

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Post-Election Sample (N=2730, November-December 2004, University of Akron)
 (Appeared as part of Table 8 in John C. Green et al., The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Presidential Vote: Increased Polarization)

The American Religious Landscape and Politics, 2004

Table 6. The Religious Landscape and Religious Expression by Candidates, Spring 2004

	Uncomfortable When Candidates Discuss Faith		Important that President have Strong Religious Beliefs	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Catholic	40%	60	70	30
Traditionalist Catholic	25	75	93	7
Centrist Catholic	39	61	74	26
Modernist Catholic	54	46	43	57
Latino Catholic	40	60	73	27

All rows sum to 100%. Agree = agree, strongly agree; disagree = disagree, strongly disagree; no opinion omitted for ease of presentation.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute, University of Akron, March - May 2004 (N=4000)

Table 5. The Religious Landscape and Political Activity by Religious Groups, Spring 2004

	Organized Religious Groups Should Stand up for Beliefs		Organized Religious Groups Should Stay Out of Politics	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Catholic	74%	26	52	48
Traditionalist Catholic	88	12	38	62
Centrist Catholic	73	27	53	47
Modernist Catholic	63	37	64	36
Latino Catholic	76	24	40	60

All rows sum to 100%. Agree = agree, strongly agree; disagree = disagree, strongly disagree; no opinion omitted for ease of presentation.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute, University of Akron, March - May 2004 (N=4000)

Table 20. The Religious Landscape and Abortion, Spring 2004

	Abortion Should Always Be Illegal	Should be Legal some Instances	Legal in many Instances	Legal in all Instances and up to Woman
Entire Sample	15%	33	17	35
Evangelical Protestants	24	45	12	19
Catholic	13	35	17	35
Traditionalist Catholic	26	51	6	17
Centrist Catholic	12	36	20	32
Modernist Catholic	3	18	25	54
Latino Catholic	18	39	17	26

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute University of Akron, March - May 2004 (N=4000)

Table 22. The Religious Landscape, Stem Cell Research and Death Penalty, Spring 2004

	Ban Research on Stem Cells			Life Prison for Death Penalty		
	Agree	No Op	Disagree	Agree	No Op	Disagree
Entire Sample	32%	17	51	34	15	51
Evangelical Christians	40	17	43	26	15	59
Catholic	32	15	53	32	15	53
Traditionalist Catholic	51	16	33	40	15	45
Centrist Catholic	32	15	53	27	13	60
Modernist Catholic	15	14	71	34	16	50
Latino Catholic	33	20	47	44	14	42

All rows sum to 100%. Agree = agree, strongly agree; disagree = disagree, strongly disagree; no opinion omitted for ease of presentation.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute University of Akron, March - May 2004 (N=4000)

Table 22. The Religious Landscape, Marriage and Gay Rights, Spring 2004

	For Marriage Favor			Support Gay Rights		
	Traditional Marriage	Civil Unions	Same -Sex Marriage	Agree	No Op	Disagree
Entire Sample	55%	18	27	57	15	28
Evangelical Christians	75	13	12	45	15	40
Catholic	48	22	30	64	16	20
Traditionalist Catholic	71	18	11	51	17	32
Centrist Catholic	52	19	29	59	18	23
Modernist Catholic	20	29	51	83	12	5
Latino Catholic	52	14	34	61	17	22

All rows sum to 100%. Agree = agree, strongly agree; disagree = disagree, strongly disagree; no opinion omitted for ease of presentation.

Source: Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute University of Akron, March - May 2004 (N=4000)