

Michigan Catholics for Kerry

Under the Bush Administration:

- America has lost 1.6 million private-sector jobs and President Bush is the only President in 72 years to lose jobs.
- 4.3 million Americans have fallen into poverty and family income has fallen for three straight years in a row. 5 million Americans have lost access to health care, leaving 45 million Americans without coverage.
- The country was misled into a disastrous war in Iraq that was opposed by Pope John Paul II. More than 1,000 men and women have lost their lives and 7,000 have come home injured, many with life-long disabilities. The Vatican has called the handling of Iraq a “moral failure.”
- The death penalty has been ardently supported. As Governor, George W. Bush oversaw more than 150 executions in Texas and continues to push the death penalty as President.
- The basic international standards of human dignity championed by the Catholic Church have been undermined as the administration has overseen the nation’s worst torture scandal in decades.
- New state statistics suggest that abortion rates have increased under President Bush’s watch after reaching a 25-year low in 2000.

John Kerry will promote the common good by:

- Creating good jobs by giving tax incentives to companies that keep jobs in the U.S.
- Ensuring dignity of work by raising the federal minimum wage.
- Providing health care coverage for every American child and extend health coverage to 95 percent of Americans.
- Opposing the death penalty in all cases except for terrorism.
- Restoring America’s respect in the world by acting with genuine compassion and rebuilding the international alliances that we need to fight terrorism. John Kerry will also make sure we go to war only when we have to, not because we want to.
- Work, across our differences, to make abortion *as rare as possible*. Support programs, like maternal health, adoption, and teen pregnancy prevention that helped reduce abortions to their lowest level in 25 years under President Clinton.

***Join us in supporting John Kerry, a man of faith,
a man of character, a man who shares our values.***

Reprinted from the Detroit Free Press October 20, 2004

LOCAL COMMENT: President's policies are in opposition to a culture of life

BY BISHOP THOMAS J. GUMBLETON

President George W. Bush has visited Michigan many times during the campaign, including a recent visit to Farmington Hills, but he has never stopped in Detroit's inner city. If he did, he would meet firsthand many men, women and children who have dramatically experienced the effects of his policies.

When Bush travels the country, he often says that he stands "for a culture of life in which every person counts and every being matters." These words resonate deeply with Catholics. But is Bush's agenda really the Catholic agenda? Does he really stand for a "culture of life" that recognizes and celebrates the worth of every human being?

The United States Catholic Bishops have written that "any politics of human life must work to resist the violence of war and the scandal of capital punishment. Any politics of human dignity must address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing and health care." Applying this agenda as the guide, it is clear that the president's words have not translated into action

War: In a "culture of life," we are called to be peacemakers. Bush, however, chose to pursue a war over the moral objections of hundreds of religious leaders, including Pope John Paul II, the U.S. Catholic Bishops and the leaders of the president's own Methodist Church. The report released on Oct. 6 by chief weapons searcher Charles Duelfer definitively proves that Saddam Hussein did not possess weapons of mass destruction. The evidence is now clear that the Bush administration misled the American people into the war in Iraq.

Speaking at the United Nations this month, Vatican official Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo said, "Everyone can see that (the war) did not lead to a safer world either inside or outside Iraq."

Now, more than 1,000 American soldiers have been killed and upward of 7,000 have been injured. The sinful and systematic abuses committed in Iraqi prisons have rocked the moral conscience of our nation and soiled our credibility in the international community. An estimated 13,000 innocent Iraqis have died as the result of the invasion. All the while, the Bush administration refuses even to tally Iraqi civilian casualties.

Capital punishment: In a "culture of life," we are called to be merciful. As the governor of Texas, however, Bush

approved the execution of 152 people. In one infamous incident, he publicly mocked a woman as she awaited execution on death row. The president's attorney general has ordered a federal prosecutor to seek the death penalty despite the prosecutor's own recommendation of a life sentence in at least 12 cases. In other words, current U.S. policy is that some human life does not matter.

Human dignity: In a "culture of life," we are called to care for the least among us, including human life in the womb. One proven way to reduce abortions is to reduce the numbers of people living in poverty. Unfortunately, under Bush, statistics show that the abortion rate has gone up. Since he took office, the number of Americans living in poverty has risen by 4.3 million, to a total of 35.9 million. I see these real people and hear their stories at the doorstep of St. Leo's every day. One of every three people living in poverty is a child. During the Bush presidency, the number of Americans without health insurance has risen by 5.2 million. Our economy has lost over 1 million jobs, and the wages that our families depend on have become stagnant. Meanwhile, the richest 1 percent received a tax break 70 times greater than the tax cut for the middle class.

How are Catholics to deal with this split between rhetoric and reality? Ours must be a prophetic voice. We must call on Bush to account for a deeply troubling record. And we must also challenge Democrats to embrace the entire culture of life, not just a selective economic and social agenda. The sad reality of American political life is that no candidate or party embraces and advances a "culture of life" in the fullest sense of the term.

Yet responsible citizenship calls us to cast our vote Nov. 2. How do we choose amongst imperfect candidates? We must each consult our conscience and consider the entirety of church teaching. And, as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' voter guide, Faithful Citizenship, encourages, we should measure "all candidates, policies, parties and platforms by how they protect or undermine the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, whether they protect the poor and vulnerable and advance the common good."

What we will not do is vote for a candidate just because he uses words that we like to hear; remembering, as scripture tells us, that we must be "doers of the Word and not hearers only."

BISHOP THOMAS J. GUMBLETON is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Detroit and pastor at St. Leo Parish in Detroit. Write to him in care of the Free Press Editorial Page, 600 W. Fort St., Detroit, MI 48226.

Copyright © 2004 Detroit Free Press Inc.