



Media Coverage of Bishop Pilla Statement Incomplete Media fails to report major points in statement on Public Officials and reception of the Eucharist

Upon the release of Bishop Anthony M. Pilla's statement to the people of the Diocese of Cleveland, local print and broadcast media focused mainly on the fact that the Bishop explained that the altar is a place of unity, healing, nourishment and grace and not for confrontation over the reception of Holy Communion by Public officials who espouse public policy contrary to Church teaching. However, Bishop Pilla's statement included several key issues in this matter which generally were never reported and which are essential for instruction and understanding:

1. The politician has an obligation to be informed on Church teaching on several issues of moral consequence. Abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment, war, poverty, health care, education, affordable housing, racism, economic justice, the defense of family based on marriage between a man and a woman committed to each other for life, fair trade, immigration and refugee policy and foreign aid, just to name a few.

2. At this time, abortion is a fundamental human rights issue for all men and women of good will. The Church gives its urgent attention and priority to the unborn because they are the most vulnerable members of the human family...when it comes to abortion, we have not reached a national consensus on the basic question of whether it is a public issue and therefore, to be regulated by law...whether it is a private issue and therefore, subject only to the dictates of personal conscience. For those who describe themselves as "pro choice" advocates, abortion is a matter of private morality and they assert the State should not control or regulate a women's choice to have a child.

In Catholic moral doctrine, abortion is an issue of public morality. The reason is that for us the issue is not the simple issue of the woman's right to have a child or not. For us, there are three actors not one. For us, it is an issue of the conflict or rights--the rights of the women and the rights of the unborn child, and we reason that where this is a conflict or rights, there is a legitimate place for the State to be involved. Our formulation of the issues, then, involves a woman, the child, and the State and for us it is an issue of public not merely private morality.

3. I also believe that public officials, especially Catholics, have a moral obligation to support policies and legislation that protect the weakest and most defenseless among us. Moral convictions have no other meaning except to be translated into choices and actions. It is my view that the true measure of a politician is the consistency of that politician's moral conviction, public expression and conduct in the policy arena.

4. No one should mistake reservations about refusing Communion or public calls to refrain from Communion as ignoring or excusing those who clearly contradict Catholic teaching in their public roles. Those who take positions or act in ways that are contrary to fundamental moral principles should not underestimate the seriousness of this situation. They must study Catholic teaching, recognize their grave responsibility to protect human life from conception to natural death, and adopt positions consistent with these principles.

The complete statement by Bishop Pilla can be viewed here on the diocesan web site in the item listed just above this one entitled "New"... The Role of the Church and Participation of Catholic Public Officials in Political Life."