

## Catholics in the public square. Consistency is the Key

By Moe Wosepka, Director Montana Catholic Conference, January 9, 2013

Catholics are called to bring their faith and values to the public square because many of the decisions that affect families, church and country are made in that arena. We are called to the public square to stand up for those who have no voice. As Cardinal Dolan says, "We root for the underdog in Catholic social justice."

Catholic involvement in the public square is a noble pursuit. Considering that secular groups have their own ideals, we cannot let them stand in a vacuum and make decisions without our involvement. There is an adage that says, "Somewhere there is a group meeting to decide your future and you have not been invited". Decisions will be made that affect us whether we are there or not.

We are the ones that fight for the underdog. Every issue we work is protecting the life and dignity of every person. This session we will see bills on abortion, the death penalty, physician-assisted suicide, poverty, homelessness, religious liberty, and many others. It is the duty of the laity to get involved and do what we can to protect those the least of our brothers and sisters.

The foundation of all our efforts comes from Catholic social teaching which tells us that we must recognize human life as sacred and respect the dignity of the human person. From that foundation, we can build a just society.

I know I have said this before, and I will say it again. Cardinal Bernadin had it right when he said, "*Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us: the old and the young, the hungry and the homeless, the undocumented immigrant and the unemployed worker. Consistency means we cannot have it both ways.*"

The single word, consistency, says it best. Fighting to protect the innocent child in the womb is absolutely necessary for pro-life efforts. Consistency means we vote to save the child in the womb. We also vote to abolish the death penalty, and we vote to prohibit doctors from prescribing chemicals for patients to commit suicide.

All of us have different experiences and different concerns so we are more passionate about some issues than others. For some the issue may be abortion or the death penalty. For others it may be elder abuse or poverty or other social issues. However, our work on those issues does not excuse us from supporting other life and dignity issues. Cardinal Bernadin further stated, "*...the Catholic position on abortion demands of us, and of society, that we seek to influence a heroic social ethic. If one contends, as we do, that the right of every fetus to be born should be protected by civil law and supported by civil consensus, then our moral, political and economic responsibilities do not stop at the moment of birth.*"

The Catholic voice on Capitol Hill will be consistent. We will work to protect the life and dignity of all humans, the innocent baby, the homeless, the disabled, and the elderly, and

the inmate on death row. Why is that? Because each of those lives was created by the same God, in His image. As a result, all life has the same inherent value. The Catholic voice is pro-life and it is consistent. I believe that is the only way that pro-life people will ever be effective in creating a culture of life.

We hope you join us. Follow our efforts by subscribing to our Legislative Alert, which will be issued every Friday. It will provide an update on issues and a call to action when a bill is in need of support. Send us your email address and we will get you on the list. Also, join us on March 4<sup>th</sup> for Catholic Days at the Legislature. More details to follow soon.