



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT
1234 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

January 5, 2010

Dear Father,

I would like to make you aware of a particularly significant event important for Christians and others of good will seeking to advance the common good in the public square. On November 20, 2009, I joined over 150 Christian religious leaders from around the country in signing the *Manhattan Declaration: A Call of Christian Conscience*. This historic document intends to speak to all citizens at a time when many important foundational decisions are being made concerning the sanctity of human life, the nature of marriage, and religious freedom.

The Manhattan Declaration is truly a call of Christian conscience and focuses on three foundational principles of justice and the common good, as illustrated in this brief description:

Christians, when they have lived up to the highest ideals of their faith, have defended the weak and vulnerable and worked tirelessly to protect and strengthen vital institutions of civil society, beginning with the family. We are Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical Christians who have united at this hour to reaffirm fundamental truths about justice and the common good, and to call upon our fellow citizens, believers and non-believers alike, to join us in defending them. These truths are:

- 1. the sanctity of human life*
- 2. the dignity of marriage as the conjugal union of husband and wife*
- 3. the rights of conscience and religious liberty.*

Inasmuch as these truths are foundational to human dignity and the well-being of society, they are inviolable and non-negotiable. Because they are increasingly under assault from powerful forces in our culture, we are compelled today to speak out forcefully in their defense, and to commit ourselves to honoring them fully no matter what pressures are brought upon us and our institutions to abandon or compromise them. We make this commitment not as partisans of any political group but as followers of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

While I joined with Christian leaders a month ago in the United States to promote values outlined in the declaration, Pope Benedict's December 16, 2009 address in his weekly audience gives additional support to its call to unceasing defense of the truth. The Holy Father tells us the only laws considered just "*are those laws that safeguard the sacredness of human life and reject the acceptance of abortion, euthanasia and unrestrained genetic experiments (and) those laws that respect the dignity of marriage between one man and one woman,*"

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It is my hope you will acquaint yourself with the Manhattan Declaration, reading the entire document by simply accessing the link provided on the first page of www.aodonline.org or by taking advantage of the resources provide on the website www.manhattandeclaration.org. As important political decisions are being crafted we can use the Manhattan Declaration to give voice to the concerns of faithful Christians who cannot remain silent as their values are compromised. In order to assist with your introduction to the declaration I have asked our Central Service staff to develop additional resources, including bulletin inserts, provide on-line access to national information, and to plan future actions in response to issues related to the foundational principles so aptly described in the Manhattan Declaration.

In closing I ask each of you to consider signing the Manhattan Declaration – as well as encouraging your parishioners to do the same – in support of the “call of Christian conscience”.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

The Most Reverend Allen H. Vigneron
Archbishop of Detroit