

AN APPEAL FOR MORAL VALUES IN POLITICS

Across our nation, debates have arisen about the place of moral and spiritual values in government policies. Members of Clergy and Laity United participate in varied religious communities and believe that such values have a legitimate place in public policy discussions. It is now our obligation to determine which values are the most politically relevant and to discern how they are to be implemented within our American tradition of separation of church and state.

THE CONSTITUTION. Our state and nation are very diverse religiously, and we must show sensitivity to and respect for all religions and their values. The First Amendment to our Constitution prohibits the “establishment of religion” and protects its “free exercise” without discrimination. Therefore, no religious institution, program, doctrine or symbol may be given official sanction. But within these constraints, individuals and groups are free to express their religious beliefs and to draw upon them to address public policy proposals.

MORAL VALUES. The differing religious communities in our society trace their moral and spiritual values to the Hebrew Scriptures, the Christian New Testament and other ancient texts they consider holy. These traditions emphasize justice, compassion, generosity and peace; and we believe it essential that these values be reflected in American politics. Since virtually all of our present public policy challenges have moral aspects, we find very regrettable the present tendency to limit the scope of moral values to such family and sexuality issues as abortion, gay marriage and stem cell research.

ACTION REQUIRED. The social, economic and environmental problems that confront America today are of such magnitude that citizens and political parties must promote policies and programs rooted in moral values, supportive of human rights, and free of religious bias and destructive rhetoric. Major areas of concern include the welfare of children, the quality of and access to education and health care, the protection of the environment, the public safety, the integrity of public officials, the adequacy of assistance to the most vulnerable, the establishment of the social and economic means for all to participate fully in community life, and the humaneness of our criminal justice system. We recognize that essential public services must be paid for by taxation, and we believe that citizens will accept necessary taxation provided it is fair.