

2273 The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation:

"The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death."⁸⁰

"The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of a state based on law are undermined. . . . As a consequence of the respect and protection which must be ensured for the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for every deliberate violation of the child's rights."⁸¹

Part 3, Section 2, Article 5, paragraphs 2271 - 2275) [Original text](#) found at [USCCB](#)

Today is Respect Life Sunday. [In a statement to mark Respect Life Sunday](#), Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia called attention to those who are most vulnerable in recent debates on health care reform – the unborn, the poor, the elderly and the immigrant – and called upon Catholics to “examine how well we, as a nation and individually, are living up to our obligation to protect the rights of those who, due to age, dependency, poverty or other circumstances, are at risk of their very lives.”

Cardinal Rigali chairs the Committee on Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Cardinal Rigali noted that the lives of the unborn are those most at risk in America and “despite the opposition of 67% of Americans to taxpayer-funded abortion, all current health care proposals being considered by Congress would allow or mandate abortion funding, either through premiums paid into government programs or out of federal revenues.”

Noting that the unborn are not alone in being under attack in current proposals, Cardinal Rigali called for health care that recognizes the humanity of the immigrant. “How can a just society deny basic health care to those living and working among us who need medical attention? It cannot and must not,” he said.

Cardinal Rigali also addressed a dangerous and false cultural attitude that some persons are not worth protecting because of their perceived “low quality of life.” He stated that “death is not a solution to life’s problems. Only those who are blind to the transcendent reality and meaning of human life could support killing human beings to mitigate economic, social or environmental problems.”

“The antidote to such myopia is to recover an appreciation for the sanctity and dignity of each unique human being,” he said.

Begun in 1972, the Respect Life Program stresses the value and dignity of human life. It is observed in the 195 Catholic dioceses in the United States. This year's theme is “Every Child Brings Us God’s Smile.” The full statement follows and may be found online at www.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rlp/09rigali-stmt.pdf.