

Catechesis on Civil Government
In celebration of Independence Day, July 4, 1776

Created Equal & Sanctity of Life
Civil Authority Established by God

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God" (Romans 13:1/Table of Duties)

- Government and the rule of Law is necessary because of the problem of sin. (Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Psalm 51:5)
- From the offices of father and mother all earthly authority is derived. (4th Commandment and Natural Law)
- The command of God legitimizes civil government.
- God rules the outer man through the force of Law and Civil Government to protect the basic God-given gifts under the Ten Commandments: (Freedom of Conscience, 1-3; Authority of marriage and family, 4-6; Sanctity of Life, 5; Personal Property, 7; Good Name and the right of due process, 8; force of law and threat of punishment for scheming to obtain or entice away from another that to which the individual has no right to, 9 and 10). Natural Law, historically, echoes those truths codified in the Ten Commandments.
- God eventually raises up or destroys those governments who set aside the rule of Law and the morality of natural law as codified in the Ten Commandments.

What is the government of the United States?

A Constitutional Republic: In a Constitutional Republic, the Constitution is the highest authority established by God. In the United States, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution ascribe to citizens specific authority and rights, which include the right of redress, to peaceably assemble, the freedom of worship, etc. According to the Constitution, these rights may never be infringed. A Christian citizen has the right and responsibility to exercise the authority granted him under the constitution, as long as it does not violate the Word of God.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE – JULY 4, 1776

When in the Course of human Events, it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the Earth, the separate and equal Station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent Respect to the Opinions of Mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the Separation. We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed, that whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

- Ascent to Natural Law that comes from God
- All men (human beings) are created equal
- Human rights come from God and transcend all earthly governments and authority, chief among them is the "right to life" or the "sanctity of human life."

THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS – ABRAHAM LINCOLN, NOVEMBER 19, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate, we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. *It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us* – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – *that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom* – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

- Lincoln's address is clearly resting upon the assertion of the Declaration of Independence, that all men are created equal.
- The Civil War was being fought in a quest to advance the cause of the sanctity of life and the freedom and value of every human being.
- It is interesting to note in these documents that individual freedom involves sacrifice in service to others or to a higher cause.

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES – JUNE 21, 1788

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

- "A more perfect union" assumes that the government is not perfect but that human beings are flawed; hence the rule of law is necessary to safeguard freedom and liberty for all.
- Establishing justice and ensuring domestic tranquility requires the ascent of the citizens to the Constitution and the rule of law. To fail to do so results in anarchy and chaos.
- For the Christian, the Fourth Commandment authority of the Constitution is paramount and falls directly beneath the allegiance one owes to God.

SELECTIONS FROM THE BILL OF RIGHTS WITH CONNECTIONS TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Amendment I: *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.* [First and Fourth Commandments]

Amendment II: *A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.* [Self-defense, under the Fifth Commandment]

Amendment IV: *The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated,* and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. [The rights of personal property, under the Seventh Commandment]

Amendment V: *No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.* [Due process and private property rights, under the Eighth and Seventh Commandments]

Amendment VI: *In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.* [The right to defend one's self, under the Eighth Commandment]