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Dear Parishioners,

Several pastors tell me questions have come to them about my endorsement and promotion of Measure 106 in the upcoming election. “Why insert the Church into politics at all?” some of you ask. Others wonder, “Why limit endorsement to just one measure?” These are fair questions. Let me give some brief answers here.

Measure 106 addresses a moral teaching of defining clarity for Catholic faith. From her beginning years the Church has taught that abortion is wrong. At all times and in all places it is the taking of an innocent life. And experience has shown that unless the right to life in the womb is protected by law, no other basic human rights are secure. That is why Catholic bishops have long supported realistic efforts to loosen abortion's hold on our society.

Whether a specific measure up for a vote effectively limits abortion is a prudential decision for individual voters to take, but our subjective assessments on a matter of life and death must be guided by objective reality. For this reason, in promoting Measure 106, as bishop I've called to mind bedrock truths at stake for everyone in our unjust abortion regime, invited serious reflection on how best to resist it here and now, and urged a YES vote in behalf of the defenseless unborn.

Another ballot initiative deals with a central moral issue as well—the issue of what constitutes a just immigration policy. Measure 105 would repeal Oregon's Sanctuary State Law.

In the voting booth the wrenching insecurity of potential family separation for thousands of our neighbors must be weighed in the balance with the rights of a nation's people to enforce the boundaries of its identity with a border.

Both perspectives find a home in Catholic teaching—the desperate plight of the unrecognized immigrant, the legitimate patriotic concerns of the citizen. But the choices need not be mutually exclusive. Many Catholics support the granting of legal status to immigrants and at the same time oppose self-declared sanctuary status by the State. Church teaching makes room for conscience to decide either way on Measure 105, so the question our vote resolves comes down to this: which path is more likely to lead to the justice we so sorely need in order to live together in peace?

In Christ our Peace,