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Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts speaks at Georgetown University's Gaston Hall in Washington April 7. Kerry's speech addressed the federal budget and economic issues.

## ELECTION

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of thousands of copies" of "Faithful Citizenship" have been distributed in Catholic parishes and organizations and downloaded from the USCCB Web site since last fall.

"Through the introduction of 'Faithful Citizenship' in classrooms, workshops and other events across the country, we are prompting Catholics and non-Catholics alike to contemplate how basic values should shape political choices," he added.

In the document, approved unanimously by the 47-member Administrative Committee, the bishops said the U.S. Catholic Church must be "engaged but not used."

"We welcome dialogue with political leaders and candidates, seeking to engage and persuade public officials," they said. "But we must be sure that events and 'photo ops' are not substitutes for work on policies that reflect our values."

The Administrative Committee — made up of the executive officers of the USCCB, elected committee chairmen and elected regional representatives — is the highest policy- and decision-making body of the bishops apart from the entire body when it meets twice a year in general assembly.

Much of the document is devoted to a discussion of issues that church leaders would like to see taken up in the presidential campaigns.

"As bishops, we do not wish to in-



Reuters/CNS

President George W. Bush discusses the role of community health centers during a late-May visit to Youngstown State University in Youngstown, Ohio. Such centers are the focus of his health-care proposal.

struct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates," it said. "We hope that voters will examine the position of candidates on a full range of issues, as well as on their personal integrity, philosophy and performance."

The document described "a consistent ethic of life" as the "moral framework" from which Catholic voters should address all issues in the political arena. It quoted extensively from the "Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life," issued in January 2003 by the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

"For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause, but a way of life and a framework for action," the bishops said. "As Catholics, we need to share our values, raise our voices and use our votes to shape a society that protects human life, promotes family life, pursues social justice and practices solidarity. These efforts can strengthen our nation and repew our church."

The bishops asked Catholics to look at the political arena in light of the question: "Who has a place at the table of life?"

"Where is the place at the table for a million of our nation's children who

are destroyed every year before they are born?" they asked. "How can we secure a place at the table for the hungry and those who lack health care in our own land and around the world? Where is the place at the table for those in our world who lack the freedom to practice their faith or stand up for what they believe?"

The document reviewed Catholic social teaching on a wide range of topics — abortion and assisted suicide, same-sex marriages and school vouchers, affordable housing and foreign aid, workers' rights and the Middle East.

The bishops said some Catholics, looking at the array of issues, "may feel politically homeless, sensing that no political party and too few candidates share a consistent concern for human life and dignity."

"However, this is not a time for retreat or discouragement," they said. "We need more, not less, engagement in political life. We urge Catholics to become more involved — by running for office; by working within political parties; by contributing money or time to campaigns; and by joining diocesan legislative networks, community organizations and other efforts to apply Catholic principles in the public square."

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