

POLICY STATEMENT ON BINGO AND GAMES OF CHANCE

The teaching of the Church on gambling or games of chance is clearly stated in Number 2413 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. It states that games of chance are not, in themselves, contrary to justice. "They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his (or her) needs and those of others. The passion for gambling risks becoming enslavement. Unfair wagers and cheating at games constitute grave matter..."

Gambling is increasingly becoming a way of life in the United States, and the state of New Mexico is no exception. More and more places and opportunities for gambling are surfacing around the state. Our people need to be reminded that, as in other matters, self-control and good sense need to be taken into account in the consideration of gambling.

Bingo is, in point, fact, a game of chance, and the same principles of self-control that apply to high-stakes gambling, apply equally to the specific subject of small-stakes gaming for charitable fund raising.

Because of the propensity for abuse, bingo in our parishes and other Church-related institutions ought to be discouraged. It would be best for our parishes and organizations to move away gradually from any games of chance.

Nonetheless, since bingo consists of relatively low-stakes games conducted in a social setting with a high level of volunteer involvement and a high return of prizes to the participants in the games, bingo is allowed in this diocese. Fund raising, other than games of chance, are to be encouraged. Parishes should follow the principles of stewardship for their financial needs.

The introduction of "video gaming" and "electronic pull tabs" may move bingo operations away from charitable fund raising and closer to commercial gambling. These developments present obstacles to maintaining the integrity of these activities and the focus on volunteerism and family-oriented benefits. Therefore, by policy, such things as video gaming and electronic pull tabs are not to be part of any parish or Catholic school fund raising in our diocese.