Today's primary races in the Fourth and Fifth Congressional districts have taken on national prominence. Closely watched by many outside the state, they mark a major new cleavage in the Church into electoral politics in Massachusetts.

On Friday, Humberto Cardinal Medeiros issued a letter to parishes urging them to "vote to save our children, born and unborn." It was the strongest statement ever made by the Roman Catholic Church in this state on the subject of abortion and elections. It was intended primarily as an attack on Fourth District candidate Frank Frank, who favors freedom of choice on abortion.

Medeiros' letter raised some troubling questions on the separation of church and state and the role of the Church in electoral politics. There were also unfavorable overtones implying criticisms of Rev. Robert Drinan, whose vacant seat Frank seeks and who supports Frank Drinan who has resigned from Congress after Pope John Paul II ordered members of the clergy to stop holding political office.

The bailiwick chosen by the Cardinal's letter has only served to exacerbate the real problem underlying not only the Congressional races but also much of electoral politics in America today. The Congressional races in the Fourth and Fifth Districts have been drawn down to one single issue: abortion versus the right to life.

Ted Kennedy, who is a Frank supporter, commented that "As long as our representatives in Congress continue to be called upon to vote on issues such as nuclear energy, it is more and more frequently tend to focus on controversial areas of emotional turmoil. There are- and should be- separate lines trending due to our votes."

Kennedy's advice comes as a voice of reason in an atmosphere of emotional turmoil. There are—and should be—many issues on hand in any election. It is important for both voters and candidates to keep in mind, especially as elections more and more frequently tend to focus on controversial issues like abortion, ERA, gun control, death penalty, and nuclear energy.

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