



# Where Justice and Truth Meet

August, 2024

*Guided by the Holy Spirit, we join with others to reimagine a future of promise and hope.  
– 2024 General Chapter Statement*

In a sense, November 5 is just around the corner. We have the privilege and responsibility to vote, to take part in our nation's political and public life. In 2024, we exercise that privilege and responsibility in a time of polarization, fear, and often the inability to have honest, constructive conversations.



As we listen to the **US Catholic Bishops** naming abortion as the pre-eminent priority, we also lift up the words of **Pope Francis from his 2013 encyclical *The Joy of the Gospel***:

"Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred.... **Equally sacred**, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection."

In our voting deliberations, we look to the twin foundations of Catholic social doctrine – **human dignity and the common good**.

How to do this with a multiplicity of issues affecting human dignity and the common good is challenging.

Discerning whom to vote for needs to go beyond looking at a single issue. **The bishops write in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship***:

"As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a

single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support."

*Voting on a single issue allows a multitude of social sins to continue unchecked.*

As we cast our votes, the principles of Catholic Social Tradition below can guide us in our decisions about these relevant issues of our time.

- Health Care as a basic right
- Climate Justice for our common home
- Immigration - being a welcoming community
- Racism and dignity for all
- Economic Justice - an inclusive economy
- Violence & Safe Communities
- Democracy – right and responsibility

## **THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

Each of us is made in God's image. Human dignity is not dependent on race, creed, color, economic class, political power, social status, culture, personal abilities, gender, sexual orientation or any other dimension by which people discriminate social groupings.

## **CARE FOR CREATION**

We are all part of the community of creation and show our respect for the Creator by our care of creation. Recent statements on the importance of environmentally and socially sustainable patterns of consumption and development have built solidly upon our Catholic tradition, which has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored.

## **COMMUNITY & THE COMMON GOOD**

The human person is both sacred and social. Each person is brother or sister to every other and can develop as a healthy human person only in a community of relationships rooted in love and justice.

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Human dignity can be protected, and a healthy community can be achieved only if basic human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency.

## OPTION FOR THE POOR

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The church calls on all of us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first in both our daily lives and public policies. A fundamental measure of our society is how we care for and stand with our poor and vulnerable brothers and sisters.

## DIGNITY OF WORK / ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. The basic rights of workers must be respected—the right to productive work, decent and fair wages, the organization and joining of unions, and economic initiative. The economy must serve people, not the other way around.



## SOLIDARITY & PEACE

We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. At the core of the virtue of solidarity is the pursuit of justice and peace. Our love for all our sisters and brothers demands that we promote peace in a world surrounded by violence and conflict.

### The Bishops note in *Faithful Citizenship*:

“Participation in political life also requires judgments about concrete circumstances. While the bishops help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not tell the laity to vote for particular candidates.”

While Bishops and priests may feel strongly about candidates, they may not dictate to their parishioners which candidate to vote for or not

vote for. We are all called to respect an individual's conscience.

The Bishops go on to say:

“On these often-complex matters, it is the laity's responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ.”

To do this requires curiosity, study, openness to engaging in various perspectives, and being a critical media consumer.

It is critical that we use our privilege and responsibility and VOTE. We recall the words of **St. Pope John Paul II in his 1991 encyclical Centesimus annus**:

“The Church values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them through peaceful means when appropriate. Thus, she cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends.”

### Resources:

- Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>
- Equally Sacred Checklist (one sheet) <https://networkadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/02/Equally-Sacred-Checklist-FINAL-English.pdf>
- Equally Sacred Checklists (expanded) <https://networkadvocates.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/08/ALL-Freedoms-One-Pagers-2-sided-2024-UPDATED.pdf>
- Irshad Manje: [How to Bridge Divides: five conversation skills that enhance your rational brain](#) (Challenging the idea, not the person and their worth)