



Where Justice and Truth Meet

October 2018

“Vulnerable ourselves, we choose to stand with the poor, accompany those on the margins, and to work toward systems that promote life.”

Together Birthing Anew, Chapter 2014

A Call to Holiness¹

“A good Catholic meddles in politics.” –Pope Francis

As Catholics, we are called to carefully consider the many critical issues facing our nation. Pope Francis reminds us, “We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.”

In our own country we see growing political divides, widening economic disparity, and increasing instances of bigotry, hate, and violence often done in the name of patriotism. At the same time, we see communities across the country come together in support of the values foundational to our faith and our nation.

Catholic Social Teaching directs us to participate in public life and exercise our civic duty. Particularly in this election season, let us engage ourselves and others, and choose the path of the **common good** to seek a better life for everyone.

We invite you into deep reflection on who we are and where we are going as a country. To nourish your reflection, we offer the following as a guide for discernment on critical issues.

Racial Justice

Racism is very much alive in our nation, in our communities, and even in our churches. Racism and white supremacy are embedded in many social structures – tax codes, school districts, the criminal justice system, housing, wages, war, immigration, and the allocation of federal resources. We are called as Catholics to reject structural racism as a grave injustice and affront

to human dignity. We need new policies that dismantle white supremacist structures that produce and reproduce race-based inequalities.

The Economy

Pope Francis calls us to reject an economy of exclusion, both domestically and internationally. The current U.S. income and wealth gap perpetuates inequality and poverty that disproportionately affects women and people of color. Poverty is the direct result of unjust wage laws, unequal pay for women, lack of federal paid family leave, systematic attacks on labor unions and rights, the role of money in politics, and more. Additionally, legislators have chosen tax policies that favor corporations and the wealthiest in our nation while they attempt to defund and dismantle the successful federal programs that create the social safety net.

Immigration and Refugees

Our faith teaches us to welcome the stranger and love our neighbor. As Catholics who believe in the sanctity of all life, we must not be complicit in the suffering of migrants living in fear and of children separated from their families. We must build bridges, not walls, and must evaluate candidates’ support for reforming an unjust immigration system and refugee policy. This includes solutions for immigrants already residing in the U.S. and must address the root causes of migration that forces people to flee violence in their home countries.

Healthcare

Healthcare is a human right, and our faith requires us to act as our sisters’ and brothers’ keepers. All people should have access to quality, affordable, and equitable care, including those with complex medical needs or preexisting conditions. The Affordable Care Act

¹ This material is taken from “*A Call to Holiness: A 2018 Guide for Voters*” created collaboratively by religious congregations and national Catholic justice organizations.

was an important first effort to meet the right to healthcare for all. Our current law must be protected and strengthened to build on the successes of the ACA, even while we work to address its limitations.

Gun Violence Prevention

As followers of the nonviolent Jesus, we deplore the increasing rate of gun-related deaths in our country. Mass shootings inspire momentary outcries, which fail to result in meaningful legislative action. Daily homicides, suicides, accidental deaths, and injuries by guns often go unnoticed except by grieving families and communities.

Global Peacemaking

We recognize the dignity of all people as children of God, even if we abhor acts of injustice and violence. As Catholics who follow the way of Jesus, we are called to focus on nonviolence and just peace. We support effective practices such as restorative justice, trauma-healing, and nonviolent resistance, etc. As wars continue to fuel violence in our world, we reject that global leadership is based on military might, and the profiteering from the arms trade and the military industrial complex. During war, the earth and people living in poverty suffer the most from death, displacement, and disease.

The Environment

Our faith calls us to be stewards of God's creation and to ensure that creation thrives for future generations. Pope Francis invites us to an ecological conversion within our own hearts and among our political leaders. We currently face the existential threat of climate change, species loss, and toxic chemical exposures that affect ecosystems and communities on a local and global scale. We are challenged by a rollback of environmental policies at the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Interior, and the State Department.

Respect for the First Amendment: Freedom of Religion and Conscience

As Catholics we share a common faith teaching. But as voters in the United States, we come together with people from a variety of faith and secular traditions to ensure that our elected leaders uphold our Constitutional rights and hold firm against discriminatory policies motivated by religious animosity.

To continue and deepen your reflection on these topics and the call to the common good, you can download the complete guide with reflection questions for each area at the following link:



[A Call to Holiness: A 2018 Guide for Voters](#)

Addressing Polarization through Catholic Social Teaching

Sister Teresa Maya grew up hearing her *abuela* say, "People understand each other by speaking to one another." In her grandmother's wisdom, she said, lies a way to address the polarization that seems to affect every aspect of U.S. society today.

"We stay in our bubbles, with people we know," feeding our fears, when "we must realize we breathe the same air," she said. "Unless you can get to know the other, it can justify the most terrible thing.... The antidote to fear is hope." Fostering *encuentros*, or encounters, on the personal level and people "really being interested in the other side of the story" would go a long way to encourage folks with different opinions to dialogue about all manner of issues with civility, Maya told an audience at Georgetown University this summer at a conference titled [Though Many, One: Overcoming Polarization Through Catholic Social Thought](#). Sister Teresa, a Sister of Charity of the Incarnate Word from San Antonio, is president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and an immigrant from Mexico.

Speakers at the conference were asked what they see as "the major cause or cost of polarization" in the country and how the principles of Catholic social thought could help everyone work for the common good.

Cardinal Blasé Cupich of Chicago also talked about fear as a major factor causing polarization, describing "merchants of fear" actively working in society today.

Moving forward, Sister Maya said, will not happen until the country has an honest conversation about "the unresolved issue of racism," which she said is "at the heart of U.S. polarization."