



Where Justice and Truth Meet

September 2020

God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also . . . social relations."

– Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, no. 178

Preparing to Vote

As we prepare to vote this fall, the following are some of the basic principles of Catholic Social Teaching. Which candidates or party best represents these? Will you follow [Pope Francis' call](#) to bring the sacred issues with you into the voting booth?

- Human life is sacred, and the dignity of the human person is the starting point for a moral vision for society.
- Human dignity can only be realized and protected in the context of relationships with the wider society. How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.
- The obligation to “love our neighbor” has an individual dimension, but it also requires a broader social commitment.
- Everyone has a responsibility to contribute to the good of the whole society, to the common good.
- The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor.
- Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency – starting with food, shelter and clothing, employment, health care, and education. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities — to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.
- The state has a positive moral function. It is an instrument to promote human dignity, protect human rights, and build the common good. All people have a right and a responsibility to participate in political institutions so that government can achieve its proper goals.



Ordinary people with extraordinary vision can redeem the soul of America by getting in what I call good trouble, necessary trouble. Voting and participating in the democratic process are key. The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it.

--Essay by John Lewis, published on the day of his funeral

- The economy must serve people, not the other way around. All workers have a right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, and to safe working conditions. They also have a fundamental right to organize and join unions. People have a right to economic initiative and private property, but these rights have limits. No one should amass excessive wealth when others lack the basic necessities of life.
 - The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. There is a “social mortgage” that guides our use of the world’s goods, and we have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, a sign of our respect for the Creator.
 - Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and confidence between peoples and nations. It involves collaboration and binding agreements. There is a close relationship in Catholic teaching between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings.
 - All people have a right to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society. It is a fundamental demand of justice and a requirement for human dignity that all people be assured a minimum level of participation in the community. It is wrong for a person or a group to be excluded unfairly or to be unable to participate in society.
 - We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice.
- Try the [“Pope Francis Voter”](#) quiz that examines the major issues that Pope Francis says Catholics and all people of good will must include in their decision.

Voting is a Moral Act

Our [Prayer for the Life of the World](#) commits us to be “in solidarity with the *rostros concretos* of the marginalized” and to “renounce our participation in the sin of racism.” These commitments also inform our voting.

Some additional resources to help us reflect on the moral decision of voting include:

[Conscience, Candidates and Discipleship in Voting](#) – Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego reminds us that “our political lives must be seen as an essential element of our personal call to holiness. This certainly means that our political actions must reflect and flow from our Catholic faith.” Pope Francis “proposes that we can only fulfill our vocation as faithful citizens if we come to see in the very toxicity of our political culture at the current moment a call for deeper conversion to Jesus Christ.”

He suggests that at least ten salient goals emerge from the Gospel and the long tradition of Catholic faith:

- The promotion of a culture and legal structures that protect the life of unborn children.
- The reversal of the climate change that threatens the future of humanity and particularly devastates the poor and the marginalized.
- Policies that safeguard the rights of immigrants and refugees in a moment of great intolerance.
- Laws that protect the aged, the ill, and the disabled from the lure and the scourge of euthanasia and assisted suicide.
- Vigorous opposition to racism in every form, both through cultural transformation and legal structures.
- The provision of work and the protection of workers' rights across America.
- Systematic efforts to fight poverty and egregious inequalities of wealth.
- Policies that promote marriage and family, which are so essential for society.
- Substantial movement toward universal nuclear disarmament.
- The protection of religious liberty.

“The faith-filled voter is asked to make the complex judgment: which candidate will be likely to best advance the common good through his office in the particular political context he will face?”



[Suppressed: The Fight to Vote](#) – While this video is based on Georgia’s 2018 gubernatorial election, it speaks to the many issues that we hear about nationally concerning the suppression of voting rights. This suppression has been specifically focused since the Supreme Court, in 2013, invalidated part of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. That decision meant that those states with the longest histories of discrimination no longer had to approve their voting changes with the federal government. As you see in the video, poor communities, communities of color, persons of color, and college students of color are the most affected.

[Voting by Mail or Absentee Ballot](#) – In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and concerns about the timeliness of the U.S. mail for the elections this fall, it may be helpful to check with the County Clerk (or local election officials) about alternatives to returning your ballot by mail. You may be able to:

- ✓ Vote early in person.
- ✓ Use a ballot drop box.
- ✓ Drop off your ballot at an election office or polling location.
- ✓ Authorize another person to collect and submit the ballot on behalf of the voter. [Check who can collect your ballot in your state.](#)

September 1 to October 4 is the *Season of Creation*



This year’s theme, “[Jubilee for the Earth](#)”, invites us to consider the integral relationship between rest for the earth and our ecological, economic, social and political ways of living. This year the need for just and sustainable systems has been revealed by the far-reaching effects of the global COVID pandemic. We yearn for the moral imagination that accompanies the Jubilee. Watch for resources in our next newsletter.