

A CALL TO PARTICIPATE

"If indeed 'the just ordering of society and of the state is a central responsibility of politics,' the Church, 'cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.'" -Pope Francis¹

"In the Catholic tradition responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation." ²

A WELL-FORMED CONSCIENCE

"The Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly." Pope Benedict XVI³

"Every person is obliged to follow faithfully what he [or she] knows to be just and right."⁴ "Catholics have a serious and lifelong obligation to form their consciences in accord with human reason, enlightened by the teaching of Christ as it comes to us through the Church."⁵



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ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND
IN OREGON

Forming Consciences



for
Faithful
Citizenship

A SUMMARY



THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE

The Church encourages Catholics to develop the virtue of prudence, which enables us "to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it." Exercising this virtue often requires the courage to act in defense of moral principles when making decisions about how to build a society of justice and peace. We have a responsibility to discern carefully which public policies are morally sound. Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended.⁶



POLITICAL, NOT PARTISAN

The Church is involved in the political process but is not partisan. The Church cannot champion any candidate or party. Our cause is the defense of human life and dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable.⁷

CURRENT AND FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES

The ongoing destruction of over one million innocent human lives each year by abortion

The excessive consumption of material goods and the destruction of natural resources, which harm both the environment and the poor

The narrowing redefinition of religious freedom, which threatens both individual conscience and the freedom of the Church to serve

Economic policies that fail to prioritize the poor, at home or abroad

A broken immigration system and a worldwide refugee crisis

Wars, terror, and violence that threaten every aspect of human life and dignity¹¹



1. *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 183
2. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 13
3. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 28
4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1778
5. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 17
6. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 19,20
7. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 58
8. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 22
9. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 24
10. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Sec. 41,42
11. USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Introductory Note

DOING GOOD/AVOIDING EVIL

"Intrinsically evil" actions, which are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor, must always be opposed. It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the intentional taking of innocent human life, such as abortion, merely as a matter of individual choice. A legal system that violates the basic right to life on the grounds of choice is fundamentally flawed.⁸

Opposition to intrinsically evil acts also prompts us to recognize our positive duty to contribute to the common good and act in solidarity with those in need. Both opposing evil *and* doing good are essential.⁹

The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Use the framework of Catholic social teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues affecting human life and dignity and issues of justice and peace. 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. Yet if a candidate's position on a single issue promotes an intrinsically evil act, a voter may legitimately disqualify a candidate from receiving support.¹⁰