Catholics and Voting
The Call to Faithful Citizenship

By Fred Kammer, S.J., J.D.

I am not going to tell anyone how to vote this year—because I believe it is morally wrong to do so. However, I also believe that considerations about voting should begin with human dignity and the common good—the two fundamentals that the bishops of the United States speak about when they work with the Second Vatican Council’s Septuagint. Hence, let us all be mindful of their truth, and duty to vote freely in the interest of distinguishing the common good.

Every four years, since at least 1975, the U.S. Catholic bishops have issued a pastoral letter on political responsibility one year before the election. In Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the bishops describe our responsibilities for political life, forming conscience, and Catholic Social Teaching. This letter points out that voting is a public duty and right to vote freely in the interest of advancing the common good.

The body of the Pastoral Letter has remained unchanged since 2015 and has been substantially the same since 2007. Thus, the bishops describe the moral principle underlying public issues and their policy applications. Only the covering letter was updated at the November, 2016, bishops’ meeting. In that letter, the bishops write:

The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself. Because it takes place within the sanctuary of marriage, and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty. [2]

In his encyclical The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis wrote about the necessity of “a firm and peaceful defense of the inviolability of human life.” We are equal to the task.

Catholics and Voting is one of the most important duties of an engaged citizen. Learn more about early voting in Louisiana (happening now through October 27th) and vote by mail through until October 30th by clicking here. 

Catholic Social Teaching
Forming Consciences, 101.

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