



Faith and Politics: Catholics are Called to Political Action

Per the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, “In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, ‘It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life’ (nos. 1913-1915).

Further, “Catholics who bring their moral convictions into public life do not threaten democracy or pluralism but enrich them and the nation. The separation of church and state does not require division between belief and public action, between moral principles and political choices, but protects the right of believers and religious groups to practice their faith and act on their values in public life.”

Thus, the Conference issues its guide to *Faithful Citizenship* every four years. The guide reminds Catholics of their obligation to not only carefully review the positions of candidates on all issues, but also to remain active in their local communities, whether it is through participation in city council meetings, signing petitions, or expressing their viewpoint to elected leaders.

Speaking out as a Catholic, however, requires a clear understanding of Catholic teaching and how it applies to the issues. Catholics are called to protect the dignity and life of all human beings from conception to natural death, to promote the common good, protect human rights, give priority to the poor and vulnerable, recognize and protect the rights of workers, protect and support families, and to be stewards of all of God’s creation. In political terms, this may translate to supporting candidates or policy decisions that protect resources for the poor, provide assistance for pregnant women and single mothers, abolish the death penalty, or promote clean air and water for all.

The Conference does not endorse candidates, nor should a parish or diocese. What all may and should do is provide relevant information to Catholics about the positions of the candidates or the implications of proposed policies, rules, or statutes and link that information to Catholic teaching. Parishioners, in turn, are obligated to seek out relevant information, discuss issues with their friends and families, and make informed, faith-based decisions about whom and what to support.

Catholics may participate in political life by, among other things:

- Voting
- Staying informed
- Actively working for changes in political platforms or government policies that contradict our moral beliefs

For more information on Catholic teaching and political involvement, please go to www.faithfulcitizenship.org.