



A Reflection on Faithful Citizenship
October 9, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Whom should we vote for in the upcoming election? How can I vote in good conscience when no candidate unconditionally aligns with Catholic moral teaching? American voters, particularly Catholics, face very difficult choices when considering how to vote in the upcoming election. However, these decisions should not be avoided or cause for division, but rather embraced as an opportunity to contribute to the common good as a faithful citizen.

A faithful citizen is a well-informed and prayerful one who seriously considers all of the moral issues. This interior reflection *should* challenge us because both national party platforms contain seriously flawed moral positions. This leaves us with a moral dilemma calling for prayer, reflection and a formed conscience in accordance with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and teachings of the Catholic Church.

In our consideration, we must each take time to humbly examine all of the three guiding moral principles for the development of a just society: 1) the defense of life from conception to natural death; 2) the needs of the weakest members of our society; and 3) the pursuit of the common good. These principles should be further considered by looking at the many specific issues, such as abortion; euthanasia; assisted suicide; capital punishment; racism; marriage between a man and a woman; the protection and formation of our children; religious liberty; care for immigrants, refugees and migrants; protection for the poor and vulnerable; the pursuit of peace and justice within education, healthcare, housing and jobs/work; and the care for God's creation.

As we prayerfully consider these significant moral positions, we must remember that our vote can never be reduced to a single issue, regardless of how gravely serious this issue is. Sadly, fundamental positions of both platforms conflict with Catholic moral teaching in significant ways. The U.S. bishops reaffirm in [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#):

“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, such as legal abortion, redefining marriage in a way that denies its essential meaning, or racist behavior, a voter may legitimately disqualify a candidate from receiving support.”⁽⁴²⁾

However, “There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position even on policies promoting an intrinsically evil act may reasonably decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil.”⁽³⁵⁾

In our highly imperfect world, we so often find ourselves in the midst of a moral dilemma. Too easily this tempts us to look for simple solutions or to become bitter, resentful or judgmental of others. In considering the upcoming election, we remember that no earthly leadership can fully satisfy our deep longing for the guidance that only God can provide as our Father.

It is my prayer that our political discourse will rise above the noise, as we are called to be a people “set apart” by the grace of God. I urge you not to fall into divisive discourse as you work through these difficult decisions, but

rather build one another up. If Jesus was able to love his enemies, even the very soldiers who crucified him — which includes all of us — we too should aspire to that same level of charity towards others, particularly those with whom we have significant disagreement. May we seek the Lord for guidance and unfailing help in our desire to follow what we know to be just and right during this election season, and always.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Walter A. Hurley
Apostolic Administrator