

PASTOR'S COLUMN

Vote This Tuesday — The Challenge of Faithful Citizenship — Your Vote Is Important!

As we end this month of October, we are mindful that we have been celebrating and promoting this month as “Respect Life!” As Catholics, we are a people who believe in life and the promotion and protection of life from womb to tomb.

We are also mindful that we are, as a nation, only two days away from a presidential election. Both major political parties are courting the Catholic vote. Sadly, but in truth, we must admit that neither party is pro-life as the Catholic Church is pro-life. We see pro-life stances in both political parties, but we also see culture of death choices in both parties. Neither of the major political parties reflects the pro-life stance of the Catholic Church.

Yet, as Catholics, we must exercise our responsibilities and duties as citizens of this country. We must take the values of the Catholic Church, and through our informed consciences, vote for the candidates and positions that best reflect a consistent pro-life ethic. This becomes an issue of conscience and not political party affiliation.

I once again share with you these “10 Questions for the Campaign” that comes to us from the Administrative Committee of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in their statement, “The Challenge of Faithful Citizenship – A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility.” This is the third time that these questions have been placed into the Bulletin for your thoughtful consideration. May they be helpful for you to vote faithfully, by voting your conscience:

1. *After September 11, how can we build not only a safer world, but a better world – more just, more secure, more peaceful, more respectful of human life and dignity?*
2. *How will we protect the weakest in our midst – innocent unborn children? How can our nation not turn to violence to solve some of its most difficult problems – abortion to deal with difficult pregnancies; the death penalty to combat crime; euthanasia and assisted suicide to deal with the burdens of age, illness, and disability, and war to address international disputes?*
3. *How will we address the tragic fact that more than 30,000 children die every day as a result of hunger, international debt, and lack of development around the world?*
4. *How can our nation help parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, a sense of hope, and an ethic of stewardship, and responsibility? How can our society defend the central institution of marriage and better support families in their moral responsibilities?*
5. *How will we address the growing number of people without affordable and accessible health care? How can health care better protect human life and respect human dignity?*
6. *How will our society combat continuing prejudice, overcome hostility toward immigrants and refugees, and heal the wounds of racism, religious bigotry, and discrimination?*
7. *How will our nation pursue the values of justice and peace in a world where injustice is common, desperate poverty widespread, and peace is too often overwhelmed by violence?*
8. *What are the responsibilities and limitations of families, community organizations, markets, and government? How can these elements of society work together to overcome poverty, pursue the common good and care for creation?*
9. *When should our nation use, or avoid the use of military force – for what purpose, under what authority, and at what human cost?*
10. *How can we join with other nations to lead the world to greater respect for human life and dignity, religious freedom and democracy, economic justice and care for God's creation?*

In the days ahead, as you continue to prepare yourself to vote, please keep these questions in mind. Remember that the Catholic Church does not endorse any political party nor does it endorse specific candidates. Do not allow any person, institution, or party to tell you how you must vote.

Pray. Spend time and energy in creating an informed conscience. Then vote your conscience.