

Faithful Citizenship

A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States

What Faithful Citizenship is NOT:

1. It is not a new idea. Calling for just laws that promote those on the margins of society is not new. Faithful Citizenship is found in the Old Testament. (Isaiah 10:1-3) Faithful Citizenship is rooted in scripture; a part of our faith tradition. (Catechism No. 1913-1915)
2. It is not an attempt by the Church to get into partisan politics. The Church does not endorse candidates and parties. The Church must maintain the integrity of our teaching and cannot become tied to someone else's agenda. Church helps to form consciences in accordance with God's truth.
3. It is not the UCSA (United Catholic States of America). Every person has the right to seek the truth.
4. It is not an attempt to create a religious voting block. We have a moral responsibility to promote what is good.

What Faithful Citizenship IS:

1. Affirmation of Catholic Social Teaching
 - a) The centrality of the Eucharist connects us to solidarity. We are called to solidarity through the body of Christ in communion with the world. (Mane Nobiscum Domine, No. 27) Our call to charity is "...as essential to her (the Church) as the ministry of the sacraments and the preaching of the Gospel." (Deus Caritas Est, Pope Benedict's Encyclical) While disagreements happen it is important to study what the Church says. Faithful Citizenship involves: 1) studying sacred scripture and the teachings of the Church, 2) carefully examining the facts and background information, 3) prayerful reflection to discern the will of God. (Faithful Citizenship No. 18) The seven basic themes of the Church:
 1. Life and dignity of the human person
 2. Call to family, community, and participation
 3. Rights and responsibilities
 4. Option for the poor and vulnerable
 5. The dignity of work and the rights of workers
 6. Solidarity
 7. Care for God's creation
 - b) Avoid evil and do good. Some things are intrinsically wrong that we can never support (abortion, euthanasia, cloning, genocide, racism, etc). We have a responsibility to promote what is good, to affirm the truths of our faith. (Faithful Citizenship No. 29). If we do not bring our religious values to the table then other values will take priority
2. Call to Faithful Citizenship
 - a) The role of the Church is to help to form consciences in accordance with God's truth (described as the voice of God in the human heart). The Church does not tell Catholics what to do or how to vote. We have to make the moral choices. (Catechism No. 1730)
 - b) Our responsibility is to participate in the political process. (Deus Caritas Est No. 13) Voting is a moral duty. (Faithful Citizenship No. 34-37) It is one small part of being politically active. Being a faithful citizen does not begin and end in the voting booth. We need to stay involved after the voting is over and be true to our values. We need to be more Catholic than we are Republican or Democrat. We ought to shape the party (so it is in line with what we value) and not have the party shape us. Catholics

Reference: Faithful Citizenship Notes (San Francisco Archdiocese Workshop (April 3, 2008) with Joan Rosenhauer from US Conference of Catholic Bishops was the key presenter. Following are notes. More information is available at: <http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/>

For information on the Society of St. Vincent de Paul's Voice of the Poor go to:

<http://www.voiceofthepoor.org>

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).

*United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship, No. 13*

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation “in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the **common good.**” **The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly,** respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility. Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that **charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as “social charity”.**

*Pope Benedict XVI
Deus Caritas Est, No. 29*