

CAPITOL

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REPORT



The Newsletter of the
Wisconsin Catholic Conference

Bishops Share Resources on Faithful Citizenship

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of Wisconsin's bishops, is distributing several resources to help Catholics reflect on their duties as faithful citizens: 1) a joint letter from the bishops of Wisconsin; 2) the latest edition of the *WCC Guidelines for Church Involvement in Electoral Politics*; and 3) a question card that voters can use when questioning candidates running for statewide or legislative office.

The bishops invite Catholics to read or re-read the U.S. bishops 2007 statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (www.faithfulcitizenship.org).

They then highlight the four major themes of *Forming Consciences*.

"First and foremost, the right to life of every human person—from conception to natural death—is the primary and thus most essential of all human rights. Faith teaches and human reason confirms that human life is not a privilege bestowed on us by others, but rather a right that society must recognize and protect."

Second, marriage between a man and woman is not just a sacred good, but a social good that government needs to recognize, encourage, and protect. "Marriage ... contributes to society because it models the way in which women and men live inter-dependently and commit, for the whole of life, to seek the good of each other" (USCCB, *Between Man and Woman*, 2003). Marriage promotes the interest of children who need the constant love, attention, and guidance of their mothers and fathers to reach their fullest potential."

Third, the Catholic consistent life ethic "extends from the vulnerable inside the womb to the vulnerable outside the womb. As Catholics we understand that God has a special love for the poor and all those in danger or distress. Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, 'whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me' (Mt 25:40)."

Fourth, as Pope Benedict XVI has said, "If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation" (World Day of Peace Message 2010).

Continue on page 3

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Contents

- **Bishops Share Resources on Faithful Citizenship**
- **Director's Corner**
- **Questions for Candidates 2010**
- **Bishop Callahan Installed as Bishop of La Crosse**
- **Study Committees Begin Work on Key Issues**



Director's Corner

John Huebscher, Executive Director

This year, as with past election years, the WCC is offering some educational resources for voters as they ponder their choices this November.

In a letter to Catholics, the bishops emphasize the importance of voting to being "faithful citizens." Through a list of suggested questions for candidates (see right column), the WCC highlights the key policy priorities of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Both are offered with the hope that Catholics find them helpful.

The WCC will not be polling candidates by requesting they complete a questionnaire form, however. The truth is that so many organizations send questionnaires to candidates that most candidates decline to answer any of them. As a result, the voters learn nothing from the exercise. Another shortcoming of the questionnaire format is that it lends itself to simplistic "yes/no" responses. Few policy issues are that simple and most legislation has complexities that can't be reduced to sound bites.

Instead, our hope is that Catholic voters will pose thoughtful questions to candidates at forums or when they meet candidates on the campaign trail, and as a result, foster civil and public conversations on our state's most pressing issues.

The eight weeks between Labor Day and election day offer ample time for faithful citizens to do just that.

THE WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE HAS UPDATED ITS WEBSITE!

Please visit the WCC's website and check out its new look.

Go online to:
www.wisconsincatholic.org

If you are not already a member, click on the "Advocacy" tab or the "E-Advocacy" link to join the WCC's electronic action network.

Questions for Candidates 2010

Where does the candidate stand on:

Right to Life & Dignity of the Human Person

- Protecting human life and preserving state abortion restrictions?
- Ensuring that state participation in health care respects the life, dignity, health, and consciences of all?
- Preserving the state ban on assisted suicide and euthanasia?
- Preserving the state ban on the death penalty?
- Prohibiting research that destroys human embryos?
- Banning the cloning of human embryos?

Family Life

- Preserving marriage as a lifelong union between a man and a woman?
- Increasing support for pregnant women in need?
- Respecting the freedom of parents to educate their children, especially in matters of moral development?
- Expanding educational choice for all families?
- Allowing a state tax credit for adoption expenses?
- Treating all immigrants with dignity and respect?

Poor & Vulnerable / Dignity of Workers

- Increasing the state minimum wage to keep pace with inflation?
- Assuring basic support for families with children living in poverty?
- Maintaining access to health care for low-income persons?
- Increasing funding for safe and affordable housing?
- Providing community-based treatment instead of incarceration to non-violent drug and alcohol offenders?
- Protecting religious liberty and freedom of conscience for workers and religious institutions?

Care of God's Creation

- Supporting farmers who implement environmentally sound management practices?
- Promoting conservation and alternative, renewable energy sources?
- Protecting our state's natural resources?

Bishop Callahan Installed as Bishop of La Crosse



On August 11, 2010, the Most Reverend William Patrick Callahan, O.F.M. Conv., was installed as the tenth bishop of the Diocese of La Crosse.

The first Conventual Franciscan bishop in the United States, Bishop Callahan served for three

years as an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and thereby as a member of the WCC Board of Directors. When Pope Benedict named Archbishop Dolan to New York, Bishop Callahan served as the administrator of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee until Archbishop ListECKI's installation.

Bishop Callahan brings extensive pastoral experience to the Diocese of La Crosse. For over ten years, he served as rector and pastor of the Basilica of St. Josaphat Parish in Milwaukee.

Just prior to becoming an auxiliary bishop, he was the spiritual director for the Pontifical North American College, the seminary for Americans in Rome.

In his installation homily, Bishop Callahan stressed his spiritual and pastoral role: "My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as your bishop I accept not simply the care of properties, the balancing of ledgers, legal affairs, and the upkeep of temporal services. As your bishop, I accept something much more significant: the call of Jesus Christ for the care and support of your immortal souls in His name. ... You are my people and I will be where you are. I never want you to think that I will be timid or afraid of doing what I am supposed to do as your bishop. ... The words of St. Augustine resonate so well here: *'With you, I am a Christian—for you, I am a bishop.'*"

Resources on Faithful Citizenship, from page 1

Natural resources are God-given and "we are all responsible for protecting them. ... [W]hen we use our natural resources wisely, all human beings, now and in the future, will have the opportunity to thrive."

The bishops conclude by acknowledging that, "Being a faithful citizen is never easy." Nevertheless, if Catholics "continue to remain engaged, not just politically but also culturally, there is so much good that we will contribute to our nation and to our world."

Finally, they urge Catholics to "demonstrate charity and respect for one another" even in the midst of vigorous civic debates.

The three resources are provided to parishes through the diocesan offices responsible for social concerns and respect life issues. The materials are also available on the WCC website at www.wisconsincatholic.org. Spanish versions of the bishops' letter and WCC guidelines will be released later this fall.

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Study Committees Begin Work on Key Issues

In 1947, the Wisconsin Legislature created what is known today as the Joint Legislative Council. The Council conducts studies on matters of concern to the Legislature and makes recommendations for legislative solutions.

At the end of each legislative session, the Council convenes a number of special study committees. These interim study committees provide in-depth investigation of pertinent policy topics. Their members include both legislators and private citizens with relevant knowledge and experience. When the 2011 legislative session begins, these committees will make recommendations to the Legislature based on their work.

This year, the Council authorized 16 study committees covering a wide range of topics. A number of them will examine policies related to assisting the poor and vulnerable, and are of particular concern for the Church.

WCC staff is monitoring the committees charged with investigating infant mortality, the funding of the criminal justice system, and fraud prevention and detection in public assistance programs. Staff will also monitor two other panels related to health care. The first will study access to health care with a focus on the shortage of providers in rural areas and inner cities. The second is charged with making recommendations for implementing federal health care reform leg-

islation in Wisconsin. This legislation mandates a wide array of new regulations. Some affect private insurance policies purchased in the commercial market, others modify state Medical Assistance programs, and still others impact health care entities and medical providers. These reforms will occur over the next several years.

The largest concern for states will likely be the development of health exchanges. It is through these exchanges that individuals may select and purchase qualified coverage from approved providers. The Special Committee on Health Care Reform Implementation will investigate options available to Wisconsin in creating its health insurance exchange. Recommendations regarding the design, operation, and governance structure for the exchange are among the topics the Committee will likely consider.

All the study committees provide valuable policy input. However, the many issues related to federal health care reform make the work and recommendations of this Committee particularly significant. Future issues of the *Capitol Report* and the WCC's *Capitol Update* will provide more information on the work of these committees in the months ahead.

For more information on the Legislature's 2010 interim study committees, visit <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc/committees/study/2010/index.htm>.