



WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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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 state office.

John Huebscher, Executive Director of the WCC, explained that the bishops "have no desire to endorse candidates or political parties" nor to "seek to impose doctrinal beliefs on fellow citizens." Rather, they seek to help Catholics form consciences, evaluate political candidates and public policies, and bring forth the love and truth of Jesus Christ.

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 interdependently 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*). 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 acknowledge, “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, the bishops urge Catholics to “demonstrate charity and respect for one another” even in the midst of vigorous civic debates.

These three resources are provided to parishes through the diocesan offices responsible for respect life and social concerns. The materials are also available on the WCC website at www.wisconsinatholic.org.

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