



FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP 2016

To learn more about the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (FCFC), visit www.faithfulcitizenship.org. For additional questions, see the Wisconsin Catholic Conference 5-part Faithful Citizenship series at www.wisconsinatholic.org.

OUR CALL AS CATHOLIC CITIZENS

What are fundamental moral issues that need to be addressed?

As the U.S. bishops explain in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (FCFC), the challenges facing our nation are many. However, as the 2015 FCFC “Introductory Note” points out, nine areas are particularly pressing at this time:

- The ongoing destruction of over one million innocent human lives each year by abortion.
- Physician-assisted suicide.
- The redefinition of marriage – the vital cell of society – by the courts, political bodies, and increasingly by American culture itself.
- The excessive consumption of material goods and the destruction of natural resources, which harm both the environment and the poor.
- The deadly attacks on fellow Christians and religious minorities throughout the world.
- The narrowing redefinition of religious freedom, which threatens both individual conscience and the freedom of the Church to serve.
- Economic policies that fail to prioritize the poor, at home and abroad.
- A broken immigration system and a worldwide refugee crisis.
- Wars, terror, and violence that threaten every aspect of human life and dignity.

IT IS IMPORTANT FOR ALL CITIZENS “TO SEE BEYOND PARTY POLITICS, TO ANALYZE CAMPAIGN RHETORIC CRITICALLY, AND TO CHOOSE THEIR POLITICAL LEADERS ACCORDING TO PRINCIPLE, NOT PARTY AFFILIATION OR MERE SELF-INTEREST.”

(FCFC, 41)

Why is protecting the unborn of such great importance?

As Pope Francis explains, “Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenceless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this... [T]his defence of unborn life is closely linked to the defence of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 213)

What about other human rights?

“The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights – to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life. The moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors – basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work – is universally binding on our consciences and may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means. Catholics must seek the best ways to respond to these needs.” (FCFC, 25)

“Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us to oppose torture, unjust war, and the indiscriminate use of drones for violent purposes; to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; to oppose human trafficking; and to overcome poverty and suffering. Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts except as a last resort after all peaceful means have failed, and to end the use of the death penalty as a means of protecting society from violent crime. We revere the lives of children in the womb, the lives of persons dying in war and from starvation, and indeed the lives of all human beings as children of God. We stand opposed to these and all activities that contribute to what Pope Francis has called ‘a throwaway culture.’” (FCFC, 45)

What is a just economy?

“Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Social and economic policies should foster the creation of jobs for all who can work with decent working conditions and just wages. Barriers to equal pay and employment for women and those facing unjust discrimination must be overcome. Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal. It also affirms economic freedom, initiative, and the right to private property.” (FCFC, 73)

What is the state of religious liberty in the U.S.?

“In the United States, religious freedom generally enjoys strong protection in our law and culture, but those protections are now in doubt. For example, the longstanding tax exemption of the Church has been explicitly called into question at the highest levels of government, precisely because of her teachings on marriage. Catholics have a particular duty to make sure that protections like these do not weaken but instead grow in strength. This is not only to secure the just freedom of the Church and the faithful here but also to offer hope and an encouraging witness to those who suffer direct and even violent religious persecution in countries where the protection is far weaker.” (FCFC, 72)

What immigration reform does the Church support?

“Comprehensive reform ... should include a broad and fair legalization program with a path to citizenship; a work program with worker protections and just wages; family reunification policies; access to legal protections, which include due process procedures; refuge for those fleeing persecution and violence; and policies to address the root causes of migration. The right and responsibility of nations to control their borders and to maintain the rule of law should be recognized but pursued in a just and humane manner.” (FCFC, 81)



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Which public policies help families?

Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should uphold the God-given meaning and value of marriage and family, help families stay together, and reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. Wages should allow workers to support their families, and public assistance should be available to help poor families to live in dignity. Such assistance should be provided in a manner that promotes eventual financial autonomy. (FCFC, 70)

What can we do to protect the natural environment and to assist the poor?

“Protecting the land, water, and air we share is a religious duty of stewardship and reflects our responsibility to born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental assault. ... The United States should lead in contributing to the sustainable development of poorer nations and promoting greater justice in sharing the burden of environmental blight, neglect, and recovery. It is important that we address the rising number of migrants who are uprooted from their homeland as a consequence of environmental degradation and climate change. They are not currently recognized as refugees under any existing international convention and are thus not afforded legal protections that ought to be due to them.” (FCFC, 86)

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