

The Catholic Churches

of

St. Edward
Elmdale

St. Francis of Assisi
St. Francis

St. Mary
Upsala



Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 18, 2020

Pastor Fr. David Grundman 320-309-4174 (cell)

Sister Mary Pat Burger St. Francis Rectory 573-2203

CENTRAL OFFICE PO Box 249 Upsala, MN 56384

Office Hours 8am – 3:30pm

Mon. – Thurs. – Fri. *Modified*

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Diocesan web site: www.stclouddiocese.org

Elevate (Birthline) Hotline: 1-800-786-0200

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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Chantelle Frie, Confirmation: 320-360-4796

Beth Lange, St. Mary/St. Edward, Gr 1-10: 320-630-8390

Niki Koopmeiners, St. Francis, Gr 1 - 10: 320-248-7553

RECONCILIATION SCHEDULE

Saturday St. Edward 7 – 7:45pm

Sunday St. Francis 7:15 – 7:45am

Tuesday St. Mary 5 – 5:45pm

Also by appointment

PRAYER LINE

Karen Liebsch: 573-4127 Kathy Koehn: 573-2363

Judy Theisen: 573-2933 Joyce Koopmeiners: 573-2728

MINISTRY TO THE SICK & THOSE WHO CANNOT GET TO CHURCH

Holy Communion can be brought to you or a loved one at home, please contact the Central Office, 573-2132

Sacrament of Marriage: Couples need to begin preparations with the priest nine months in advance and must call the Pastor before setting a date.

Sacrament of Baptism: Contact the office before desired baptism date.

NEW PARISHIONERS: Please stop in or call the Office.

BULLETIN DEADLINE: Noon on Thursday Announcements submitted after deadline may not get into the upcoming bulletin.

If there is a Funeral and a Daily Mass at the same parish, the Daily Mass is canceled with the exception of Tues. evening.

Remember in prayer those in need of the Lord's healing and strength:

Darwin Binek, Rose Binek, Jordan Bowen, Kristi Brezinka, Bernetta Czech, Aubriella Eggert, Melvin Hartung, Kathy Hennek, Ramona Heurung, Kieran Kloss, Marjorie Lehner, David Loehlin, Kim (Kulla) Nelson, Roger Thell, Ken Welle, Ron Carlson, David Heim, Bernadine Bartkovicz, Irene Stern, Lorraine Frie, Donna Scholz, Cindy Fleischhacker, Carol Langner, Ralph Schleper, Mike Carlson, Delores Eiynek, Raymond Kurowski, Ken Wielenberg

WEEKEND COLLECTIONS

St. Mary: Adult \$968.00; Loose \$8.00; Votive \$22.00; Sex Abuse Settlement \$2,000.00; Fall Collection \$300.00; Online giving \$250.00 - **\$3,548.00**

St. Edward: Adult \$460.00; Loose \$18.00; Votive \$12.00; Fall Collection \$50.00; Sex Abuse Settlement \$500.00 - **\$1,028.00**

St. Francis: Adult \$1,366.00; Loose \$113.01; Sex Abuse Settlement \$1,500.00; Online giving \$100.00 - **\$3,079.01**

October Month of Rosary

Thanks to everyone who joined us October 10th for our Fatima Rosary Crusade.



Mass Schedule Oct. 19 - 25, 2020

Monday: 10/19 *Sts. John de Brebeuf & Isaac Jogues*

NO MASS SCHEDULED

Tuesday: 10/20 *St. Paul of the Cross*

St. Mary 6:00pm †† Lennie & Nancy Holmer
- Joyce Koopmeiners

Wednesday: 10/21 *St. Hilarion*

St. Francis 8:00am † Mary Ziegler
- Karen Becker

Thursday: 10/22 *St. John Paull II*

St. Edward 8:00am †† George & Rose Opatz
- Family

Friday: 10/23 *St. John of Capistrano*

St. Mary 7:30am † Diane Lange

Saturday: 10/24 *St. Anthony Mary Claret*

St. Edward 8:00pm † Peter Molus
- Adeline Molus

Sunday: 10/25 *Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

St. Francis 8:00am †† Norbert & Veronica Toenies
- Darrell & Anette Wegleitner

St. Mary 10:00am People of the Parishes



Religious Education

Oct. 21:

Grades 1 – 6: Class 6:30 – 7:30pm

Grades 7 - 10: Class 7:30 – 9pm

Modified Office Hours

Office Manager hours at Upsala will be Monday, Thursday, and Friday 8am – 3:30pm until further notice. Janice will be helping at the Royalton office on Tuesdays.

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION



St. Mary 12 – 4pm First Wed. (11/4)

St. Edward 12 – 4pm First Fri. (11/6)

St. Francis 7am - 8pm 2nd Tues. (11/10)

Benediction follows Adoration in all parishes

New Mass Schedule

Starting Oct. 31/Nov. 1:

Saturday 4:00pm at St. Mary, Confessions 3:15 – 3:45pm

Sunday 8:00am at St. Edward, Confessions 7:15 – 7:45am

Sunday 10:00am at St. Francis, Confessions 9:15 – 9:45am

Box of Joy!

Gift boxes are provided and can be found in the back of each parish. The total expense for each box are the contents inside, as well as a \$9.00 shipping and handling fee. Complete instructions are inside each box. Boxes can be dropped off at the parish office during office hours. The deadline is November 15, 2020. If you have any questions, please call Tamara at 320-573-4108.

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

III – Barb Kobylinski & Ryne Pelzer Oct. 24 @ St. Martin

THREE SAINTS NEWS

Lector Workbooks

Lector workbooks for the new Liturgical year are available in the sacristies. Lectors please pick one up.

“Paying for the sins of others”

This week marks an end to file claims of clergy sexual abuse in the St Cloud Diocese. This deadline is regards to obtaining any financial compensation. Without a doubt, if someone comes forward after this date with a credible accusation, our diocese would help them in seeking healing to this terrible atrocity. Thanks to your great generosity and kindness in donating to this cause as thus far our three parishes as already we have given: \$4,000! In my former parishes, and yes, they are larger than ours to date they have given over \$12,000. All three of our finance committees are in agreement that our parishes will do what is being asked of us. All 131 parishes are asked to give \$15,500 by November 20, 2020 which will total \$2 million toward the \$22.5 million trust to compensate survivors. By your personal gifts of “paying for the sins of others” you are receiving special graces for helping those who have been sinned against as well as helping our parishes not take as much from our saving accounts.

Pray for Our Family Farms

“It’s humbling, after all these years of farming, to know that while I may plant straight, or timely, I cannot make the seeds grow by myself without help from above. That is the same help we need to call on to get through this trial.” said Joe Borgerding who is a parishioner from Elrosa. Please pray daily that our grain and dairy farmers would be blessed with fair market prices as well as beautiful and safe harvest season.

Welcome New Ministry Committee

We need two people from each of our six parishes (Holdingford area) to brainstorm how we can better welcome new members when they join our parishes. Thanks to Rosanne Voss for your willingness to be one of the reps from St Francis.

Ushers Collect Offerings

Thank you ushers for collecting people’s offerings as we did prior to the covid-19 virus. Ushers, simply bring up just the collection and give it to the priest. The diocese reminded us that ushers need to wear their mask during the collection.

Fatima Rosary Gathering

“You are amazing as over 60 people gathered the previous Saturday in the parking lot of St Mary’s praying the rosary along and other prayers. Thanks to Gerry and Mary Jane Boeckermann for organizing this day. They said that we had twice as many people than ever have ever had! Praise God! Continue to heed Mother Mary’s message to “pray the rosary daily” Stay close to Mother Mary and you stay close to Jesus.”
Fr David

Pro-Life Corner

“This past January, I shared with Pope Francis that the bishops of the United States had been criticized by some for identifying the protection of the unborn as a preeminent priority. The Holy Father expressed his support for our efforts observing that if we fail to protect life, no other rights matter.” Archbishop Naumann, (Chairman Conference of U.S. Bishop’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities)

Prayer for New Bishop

Prayer cards are found in the entrance of our churches. With Bishop Kettler turning 76 in November, it has been one year since he has submitted his resignation to Rome.

YOUTH NEWS

Youth Fund

Are you interested in becoming more involved with our young people? In Fr David’s former parishes, they have about \$18,000 in their youth account. Perhaps in your home or farm or activity that could be a connection for our youth? Please contact Tammy Lange for more information or you have additional ideas.

Young People Needed

All youth in grades 7 -12, please consider becoming a lector, greeter or usher. We need you. Jesus needs you. We want to get you more involved in our Masses. First communicants, once you receive Jesus it would be great for you to consider serving Mass.

Mass Servers Needed

It would be great if we could have one server per Mass on the weekends. Unfortunately, you will have to wear a mask. You could carry the cross in at the beginning and carry it out; ring the consecration bells and receive the basket from the ushers.

Trick or Treat

Fr David will have treats and holy cards available following the 4pm Mass October 31st in the entrance of St Mary’s. For all you ‘young at heart’, if you behave at Mass, perhaps he will give you some candy! He will remain in the entrance for a few hours following the Mass handing out sweets. Parents in light of this pandemic, you have to know if this interests you.

ST. EDWARD’S NEWS

Saturday, October 24 – 8pm

EM of HC: Dorene Czeck Lector: Tracey Hartung

Greeters: Megan Wensmann

Ushers: Dennis Biniek & Nick Schleper

ST. FRANCIS’ NEWS

Sunday, Oct. 25 – 8am

EM of HC: Mary Jane Boeckermann

Lector: Mary Jane Boeckermann

Greeters: Dan & Rita Lange

Church Cleaning

Is there anyone in the St. Francis parish that would be interested in cleaning the church? It would be a paid position about 6-8 hours per month. Please call the office if you are interested.

Folding Lawn Chairs

There are still two lawn chairs in the back of church that were left after the Outdoor Mass and raffle.

ST. MARY’S NEWS

Sunday, Oct. 25 – 10am

EM of HC: Dave Scholz Lector: Kim Koehn

Greeters: Nathan & Laura Ripplinger

Ushers: Tom & Jan Kilian

NOTES FROM FR. DAVID

Undoubtedly, we have spent much of the past week doing things others have asked us to do; work for our bosses, errands for our spouses, homework for our teachers, care for our children, parents or grandparents. Hopefully we have spent part of the past week also doing things God asks of us, though they may overlap quite a bit with the rest. Here and now, however, we dedicate this time to God. Let us reflect on all the gifts God has given us and lift our hearts and voices in thanksgiving and praise.

World Mission Sunday this weekend has the theme of “Here Am I, Send Me.” This collection connects us with the loving work of missionaries throughout the world as well as encounters taking place here in our own diocese. As Catholics, this is our opportunity to collectively combine our resources to carry out our baptismal call as missionary disciples. I decided that each of our parishes will give \$250 along with any additional gifts that you give.

Our Three Saint Parishes will be “mission” as our Office Manager Janice Wuebkers will be helping out Fr Roger Klassen from Holy Trinity Parish in Royalton and his other parishes. She will be helping update their bookkeeping. He and I spoke of how for the next two months, she will be working in their office on Tuesdays which means that she will only be in our Upsala office Monday, Thursday and Friday. She also works as Business Manager in the Holdingford Church Office on Wednesdays. We are sorry about any inconvenience this may create. Fr Roger knows that this is temporary. In addition, there has been some health-related issues for a staff person, so God is blessing us for helping them out. Thank you for your patience and understanding. I plan to be in the office most of Tuesdays, so for part of my “mission” I get to be a secretary!

The call to “Make God’s Love Visible” is the 2020 annual appeal of Catholic Charities taking place across our diocese. With the current pandemic, your support is needed more than ever. Community services like their food shelf, home-delivered meals, and financial and housing counseling will continue to see an increase in demand with winter fast approaching. Know that 100% of all donations support programs throughout Central Minnesota.

You are too kind. Truly. Thank you for your support and prayers with my recent announcement of new weekend Masses schedule beginning in two weeks. This is most greatly appreciated as we all have to make the best of these trying times. We all know that it is God who will help see us through these times.

And finally, listen to the powerful words of Pope Francis: “We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.”



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October 1, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Are you ready to cast your ballot on Election Day, Nov. 3? Some Minnesotans are already participating in early voting.

This election cycle has been especially contentious, and I understand why some people are tempted to tune out from the messiness of today's politics. But, as Catholics, we need to be engaged in these public conversations because the future of our families, communities and nation depend on it.

Our Catholic faith teaches us that responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. Voting with the aim of protecting human life, promoting human dignity and advancing the common good of all God's children helps to make the world a better place. It is a way to answer Christ's command to "love one another" (John 13:34).

Many Catholics look to the Church for guidance in making their voting choices. Some seek strong statements from me or their pastors about whom to vote for or against. But neither I nor your pastors can tell you how to vote. Voting is a decision left to each individual. It should be the culmination of a longer process of education and discernment during which you properly form your conscience so you can make good decisions regarding the public policies and moral issues at stake in the election.

This requires hard work because there are many issues and challenges that demand our attention. But this is where the Church can help. A good place to begin is by reading and reflecting on the U.S. bishops' document "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility." This document is updated every four years in the lead-up to the presidential election. It gives a good explanation of Catholic social teaching, what our voting responsibilities are, and the moral dimensions of major issues facing our country.

Forming our consciences properly, as the document outlines, requires a sincere desire to embrace goodness and truth, a willingness to seek this truth by studying Scripture and Church teaching, learning the facts about the choices we face, and then praying and reflecting to discern God's will. This process reflects the reality that our participation in political life should be influenced by our faith, not the other way around.

Respect for the human dignity of every person, no matter their stage of life, color of their skin or their abilities is at the heart of faithful citizenship. We bishops have identified

abortion as a preeminent priority because it is a direct attack on human life. But this doesn't mean we can ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity, including racism, poverty, the death penalty, threats to the environment, and unjust immigration policies that divide families. Not every issue carries the same moral weight, but many are linked to the "throwaway culture" that Pope Francis asks us to resist and replace with a culture of life, mercy, hope and justice. As voters, we must account for all of these issues and concerns when we cast our ballots.

Our diocese has many voting resources available to assist you in preparing for Election Day. This includes downloadable copies of the "Faithful Citizenship" document in both English and Spanish, parish guidelines for political activity, an election novena, and a host of other resources from the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC) and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Links to all of these resources can be found on our diocesan website at www.stcdio.org/faithfulcitizenship. I encourage parishes to download some of these resources and share them with parishioners who might not have access to the internet.

It is important for pastors and parishes to only use voting resources that are on the diocesan website or otherwise approved by the diocese, MCC or USCCB. Parishes should not authorize the distribution of partisan political materials on parish property.

Please demonstrate your Christian values in the way you conduct yourself and your political conversations now and in the future. My hope is that we Catholics can be a leavening influence on the division and polarization so apparent in today's political climate by being good role models of civility as we talk with our neighbors and fellow parishioners — in person and on social media. I encourage you to join the USCCB's "Civilize It" campaign and take the civility pledge, which also is available on our website.

These next few weeks are a good time to study or revisit the major issues facing our nation, state and local communities and to reflect on them and the candidates through a Catholic moral lens in preparation for voting. And, please remember, the responsibilities of faithful citizenship don't end with Election Day. No matter which candidates we vote for, or which ones win or lose, we must continue our ongoing efforts to hold our public officials accountable for protecting life, promoting human dignity and advancing the common good.

Every individual is responsible for making their own voting choices. Please do so thoughtfully and with a properly formed conscience.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


+Donald J. Kettle
Bishop of Saint Cloud

The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship



Part I of II: Our Call as Catholic Citizens

This brief document is Part I of a summary of the US bishops' reflection, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, which complements the teaching of bishops in dioceses and states.

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship is the teaching document of the Catholic Bishops of the United States on the political responsibility of Catholics. It provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens. As Catholics, we bring the richness of our faith to the public square. We draw from both faith and reason as we seek to affirm the dignity of the human person and the common good of all.

Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good.¹ In *Rejoice and Be Glad* [*Gaudete et exsultate*], Pope Francis writes:

Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. . . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor.²

As Catholics, we are part of a community with profound teachings that help us consider challenges in public life, contribute to greater justice and peace for all people, and evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates' promises and actions in light of the Gospel in order to help build a better world.

Why Does the Church Teach About Issues Affecting Public Policy?

The Church's obligation to participate in shaping the moral character of society is a requirement of our faith, a part of the mission given to us by Jesus Christ. As people of both faith and reason, Catholics are called to bring truth to political life and to practice Christ's commandment to "love one another" (Jn 13:34).

The US Constitution protects the right of individual believers and religious bodies to proclaim and live out their faith without government interference, favoritism, or discrimination. Civil law should recognize and protect the Church's right and responsibility to participate in society without abandoning its moral convictions. Our nation's tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups and people of faith bring their convictions into public life. The Catholic community brings to political dialogue a consistent moral framework and broad experience serving those in need.

Who in the Church Should Participate in Political Life?

In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to any political party or interest group. In today's environment, Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and few candidates fully share our comprehensive commitment to human life and dignity. This should not discourage us. On the contrary, it makes our obligation to act all the more urgent. Catholic lay women and men need to act on the Church's moral principles and

become more involved: running for office, working within political parties, and communicating concerns to elected officials. Even those who cannot vote should raise their voices on matters that affect their lives and the common good. Faithful citizenship is an ongoing responsibility, not just an election year duty.

How Can Catholic Social Teaching Help Guide Our Participation?

In the words of Pope Francis, "progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity depends on four principles related to constant tensions present in every social reality. These derive from the pillars of the Church's social doctrine, which serve as 'primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena.'"³ The four principles include the dignity of the human person, the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity. Taken together, these principles provide a moral framework for Catholic engagement in advancing what we have called a "consistent ethic of life" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 22).

Rightly understood, this ethic does not treat all issues as morally equivalent; nor does it reduce Catholic teaching to one or two issues. It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life and other human rights, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental obligation to respect the dignity of every human being as a child of God.

Catholic voters should use Catholic teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues and should consider candidates' integrity, philosophy, and performance. 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" (USCCB, *Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 33). The following summary of the four principles highlights several themes of Catholic social teaching for special consideration: these include **human rights and responsibilities, respect for work and the rights of workers, care for God's creation, and the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.**⁴

The Dignity of the Human Person

Human life is sacred because every person is created in the image and likeness of God. There is a rich and multifaceted Catholic teaching on human dignity summarized in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Every human being "must always be understood in his unrepeatable and inviolable uniqueness . . . This entails above all the requirement not only of simple respect on the part of others, especially political and social institutions and their leaders with regard to every man and woman on the earth, but even more, this means that the primary commitment of each person towards others, and particularly of these same institutions, must be for the promotion and integral development of the person" (no. 131). The *Compendium* continues, "It is necessary to 'consider every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary for living it with dignity' (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27).

Every political, economic, social, scientific and cultural program must be inspired by the awareness of the primacy of each human being over society.”⁵

Subsidiarity

It is impossible to promote the dignity of the person without showing concern for the family, groups, associations, and local realities—in short, for those economic, social, cultural, recreational, professional, and political communities to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth.⁶ The family, based on marriage between a man and a woman, is the fundamental unit of society. This sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children must not be redefined, undermined, or neglected. Supporting families should be a priority for economic and social policies. How our society is organized—in economics and politics, in law and public policy—affects the well-being of individuals and of society. Every person and association has a right and a duty to participate in shaping society to promote the well-being of individuals and the common good.

The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions; yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good.⁷

The Common Good

The common good is comprised of “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily.”⁸

Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if **human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met**. Every human being has a right to life, a right to religious freedom, and a right to have access to those things required for human decency—food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to ourselves, to our families, and to the larger society.

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. An economic system must serve the dignity of the human person and the common good by **respecting the dignity of work and protecting the rights of workers**. Economic justice calls for decent work at fair, living wages, a broad and fair legalization program with a path to citizenship for immigrant workers, and the opportunity for all people to work together for the common good through their work, ownership, enterprise, investment, participation in unions, and other forms of economic activity. Workers also have responsibilities—to provide a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, to treat employers and coworkers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers, employers, and unions should not only advance their own interests but also work together to advance economic justice and the well-being of all.

We have a duty to **care for God’s creation**, which Pope Francis refers to in *Laudato Si’* as “our common home.”⁹ We all are called to be careful stewards of God’s creation and to ensure a safe and hospitable environment for vulnerable human beings now and in the future. Pope Francis, consistent with St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI (World Day of Peace Message, 1990 and 2010), has lifted up pollution, climate change, lack of access to clean water, and the loss of biodiversity as particular challenges. Pope Francis speaks of an “ecological debt” (no. 51) owed by wealthier nations to developing nations. And he calls all of us to an “ecological conversion” (no. 219), by which “the effects of [our] encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in [our] relationship with the world around [us]”.¹⁰ Indeed, this concern with “natural ecology” is an indispensable part of the broader “human ecology,” which encompasses not only material but moral and social dimensions as well.

Solidarity

Solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and of each individual, because we are *all* really responsible *for all*.” It is found in “a commitment to the good of one’s neighbor with the readiness, in the Gospel sense, to ‘lose oneself’ for the sake of the other instead of exploiting him, and to ‘serve him’ instead of oppressing him for one’s own advantage.”¹¹

We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. Our Catholic commitment to solidarity requires that we pursue justice, eliminate racism, end human trafficking, protect human rights, seek peace, and avoid the use of force except as a necessary last resort.

In a special way, our solidarity must find expression in the **preferential option for the poor and vulnerable**. A moral test for society is how we treat the weakest among us—the unborn, those dealing with disabilities or terminal illness, the poor, and the marginalized.

Conclusion

In light of Catholic teaching, the bishops vigorously repeat their call for a renewed politics that focuses on moral principles, the promotion of human life and dignity, and the pursuit of the common good. Political participation in this spirit reflects not only the social teaching of our Church but the best traditions of our nation.

Notes

- 1 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1913-15.
- 2 *Gaudete et Exsultate*, no. 25.
- 3 *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 221.
- 4 These principles are drawn from a rich tradition more fully described in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005), no. 160. For more information on these principles, see *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 2016, nos. 40ff.
- 5 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 132. This summary represents only a few highlights from the fuller treatment of the human person in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. For the fuller treatment, see especially nos. 124-159 where many other important aspects of human dignity are treated.
- 6 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 185.
- 7 *Centesimus Annus*, no. 48; *Dignitatis Humanae*, nos. 4-6.
- 8 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 164.
- 9 *Laudato Si’*, no. 77.
- 10 *Laudato Si’*, no. 217.
- 11 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 193. (See Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27)

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The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship



Part II of II: Making Moral Choices and Applying Our Principles

This brief document is Part II of a summary of the US bishops' reflection, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, which complements the teaching of bishops in dioceses and states.

Part I of the summary of the US bishops' reflection, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, considered the core principles that underlie Catholic engagement in the political realm. Part II is a consideration of the process by which these principles are applied to the act of voting and taking positions on policy issues. It begins with the general consideration of the nature of conscience and the role of prudence. The application of prudential judgment does not mean that all choices are equally valid or that the bishops' guidance and that of other church leaders is just another political opinion or policy preference among many others. Rather, Catholics are urged to listen carefully to the Church's teachers when they apply Catholic social teaching to specific proposals and situations.

How Does the Church Help the Catholic Faithful to Speak About Political and Social Questions?

A Well-Formed Conscience

The Church equips its members to address political questions by helping them develop well-formed consciences. "Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act. . . . [Every person] is obliged to follow faithfully what he [or she] knows to be just and right" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778). We Catholics have a lifelong obligation to form our consciences in accord with human reason, enlightened by the teaching of Christ as it comes to us through the Church.

The Virtue of Prudence

The Church also encourages Catholics to develop the virtue of prudence, which enables us "to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1806). Prudence shapes and informs our ability to deliberate over available alternatives, to determine what is most fitting to a specific context, and to act. Prudence must be accompanied by courage, which calls us to act. As Catholics seek to advance the common good, we must carefully discern which public policies are morally sound. At times, Catholics may choose different ways to respond to social problems, but we cannot differ on our obligation to protect human life and dignity and help build, through moral means, a more just and peaceful world.

Doing Good and Avoiding Evil

There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. These intrinsically evil acts must always be rejected and never supported. A preeminent example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion. Similarly, human cloning, destructive research on human embryos, and other acts that directly violate the sanctity and dignity of human life including genocide, torture, and the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, can never be justified. Nor can violations of human dignity, such as acts of racism, treating workers as mere means to an end, deliberately subjecting workers to subhuman living conditions, treating the poor as disposable, or redefining marriage to deny its essential meaning, ever be justified.

Opposition to intrinsically evil acts also prompts us to recognize our positive duty to contribute to the common good and act in solidarity with those in need. Both opposing evil and doing good are essential. As St. John Paul II said, "The fact that only the negative commandments oblige always and under all circumstances does not mean that in the moral life prohibitions are more important than the obligation to do good indicated by the positive commandment."¹ The basic right to life implies and is linked to other human rights such as a right to the goods that every person needs to live and thrive—including food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work.

Avoiding Two Temptations

Two temptations in public life can distort the Church's defense of human life and dignity: The first is a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity. The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed. The second is the misuse of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of dismissing or ignoring other serious threats to human life and dignity. Racism and other unjust discrimination, the use of the death penalty, resorting to unjust war, environmental degradation, the use of torture, war crimes, the failure to respond to those who are suffering from hunger or a lack of health care or housing, pornography, human trafficking, redefining civil marriage, compromising religious liberty,

or unjust immigration policies are all serious moral issues that challenge our consciences and require us to act.

Making Moral Choices

The bishops do not tell Catholics how to vote; the responsibility to make political choices rests with each person and his or her properly formed conscience, aided by prudence. This exercise of conscience begins with always opposing policies that violate human life or weaken its protection.

When morally flawed laws already exist, prudential judgment is needed to determine how to do what is possible to restore justice—even if partially or gradually—without ever abandoning a moral commitment to full protection for all human life from conception to natural death (see St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 73).

Prudential judgment is also needed to determine the best way to promote the common good in areas such as housing, health care, and immigration. When church leaders make judgments about how to apply Catholic teaching to specific policies, this may not carry the same binding authority as universal moral principles but cannot be dismissed as one political opinion among others. These moral applications should inform the consciences and guide the actions of Catholics.

As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet a candidate's position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support.¹

What Public Policies Should Concern Catholics Most?

As Catholics, we are led to raise questions about political life other than those that concentrate on individual, material well-being. We focus more broadly on what protects or threatens the dignity of every human life. Catholic teaching challenges voters and candidates, citizens and elected officials, to consider the moral and ethical dimensions of public policy issues. In light of ethical principles, we bishops offer the following policy goals that we hope will guide Catholics as they form their consciences and reflect on the moral dimensions of their public choices:

- Address the preeminent requirement to protect **human life**—by restricting and bringing to an end the destruction of unborn children through abortion and providing women in crisis pregnancies with the supports they need. End the following practices: the use of euthanasia and assisted suicide to deal with the burdens of illness and disability; the destruction of human embryos in the name of research; the use of the death penalty to combat crime; and the imprudent resort to war to address international disputes.
- Protect the fundamental understanding of **marriage** as the life-long and faithful union of one man and one woman

as the central institution of society; promote the complementarity of the sexes and reject false “gender” ideologies; provide better support for family life morally, socially, and economically, so that our nation helps parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility.

- Achieve comprehensive **immigration** reform that offers a path to citizenship, treats immigrant workers fairly, prevents the separation of families, maintains the integrity of our borders, respects the rule of law, and addresses the factors that compel people to leave their own countries.
- Help families and children overcome **poverty** and ensure access to and choice in **education**, as well as decent work at fair, living wages and adequate assistance for the vulnerable in our nation, while also helping to overcome widespread hunger and poverty around the world, especially in the policy areas of development assistance, debt relief, and international trade.
- Ensure full conscience protection and **religious freedom** for individuals and groups to meet social needs, and so enable families, community groups, economic structures, and government to work together to overcome poverty, pursue the common good, and care for creation.
- Provide **health care** while respecting human life, human dignity, and religious freedom in our health care system.
- Continue to oppose policies that reflect racism, hostility toward immigrants, religious bigotry, and other forms of **unjust discrimination**.
- Establish and comply with moral limits on the use of **military force**—examining for what purposes it may be used, under what authority, and at what human cost—with a special view to seeking a responsible and effective response for ending the persecution of Christians and other religious minorities in the Middle East and other parts of the world.
- Join with others **around the world** to pursue peace, protect human rights and religious liberty, and advance economic justice and care for creation.

Notes

1. *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 52.

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