



**The Church is called to share social teaching, to highlight the moral dimensions of issues, to participate in debate on public policy, and to witness to the Gospel.**

A recent Vatican statement reminds us that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit voting for political programs that contradict fundamental principles of our faith. It also reminds us that we cannot isolate a particular element of Catholic doctrine. While we may be committed politically to a single issue, we are not alleviated of our responsibility to the common good.

We hope that voters will examine candidates on the full range of issues and on their personal integrity, philosophy, and performance. A consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework to address political issues.

For Catholics, the defense of human life and dignity is not a narrow cause. As Catholics we need to share our values and use our votes to shape a society that pursues, first and foremost, justice. Here are some key themes of our Catholic social tradition:

- **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable**

The Gospel calls Christians to put the needs of the poor first. Those with the greatest need require the greatest response.

- **Life & Dignity of the Human Person**

All people are a reflection of God and thus all human life, from conception through death, is sacred.

- **Call to Family, Community & Participation**

In community, we realize the fulfillment of our dignity and rights in relationship with others. We must learn to live in true Christian community.

- **Rights & Responsibilities**

Catholic teaching not only emphasizes the right to life but also the basic necessities that provide quality to life: food, shelter, health care, education, employment, etc. When there are people who lack basic rights, the common good of all suffers.

- **Dignity of Work & the Rights of Workers**

Catholic tradition holds that work is an expression of our dignity and an expression of our involvement in God's creation. People have a right to decent work, fair wages, and private property. The economy exists to serve people, not vice versa.

- **Solidarity**

Given that we are fundamentally social and called to community, we are called to continue to build our communities so that all people may attain their full human potential. By working for justice, we fulfill our mandate to build the Body of Christ.

- **Care for God's Creation**

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith.

*Excerpts adapted from the USCCB Bishops' Statement on Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility--The Role of the Church.*

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/faithfulcitizenship/>