



# Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship



*In the eight weeks leading up to our national elections, Campus Ministry will provide excerpts from *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 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.*

*(See the full text of the document in English at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf> and in Spanish at <https://www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-spanish.pdf>.)*



Week 1: September 7-11

## **The Call to Participate in Public Life**

Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good. 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.”

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.

*Copyright © 2020, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. All rights reserved.*



Watch the 2 minute video "Catholics Participate in Public Life"  
produced by the U.S. Bishops at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=29&v=YpijvheFjAA&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=29&v=YpijvheFjAA&feature=emb_logo).



*Prepared by The Office of Campus Ministry at Assumption University to help members of the University community form their consciences and prepare to participate in the upcoming national elections. All material is drawn from the "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.*