

Pre-Election Talking Points

“Our Commitment to Faithful Citizenship”

Introduction:

- Right now, we are in the last few days before the Primary Election. The last several months have been filled with speeches, debates, campaign ads, conflict, and controversy.
- Today’s Scripture readings are perfect timing. In the midst of this climate, they are a breath of fresh air to remind us that God is the center of our existence, and that we are called to make him the foundation of our lives.
- This does not mean that we are to separate ourselves from the world and focus exclusively on God. Rather, as the Gospel points out, love of God and love of neighbor are united, and both are our task as believers.
- What does this mean for us as Catholics in this election?

Let’s begin by taking a look at the first two readings:

Isaiah reminds us: *Thus says the LORD: Say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not!*

St. James tells us: *My brothers and sisters, show no partiality as you adhere to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.*

These readings remind us that God is the foundation for our lives – we owe to him everything that we are. We are reminded that all that we have is a gift and we express our gratitude through the way we live our lives, the decisions we make, and how we treat others. In this election, we should look to our faith and remember that the Lord is our strength, our rock, our deliverer.

- As we approach the elections, tensions often rise high. We may feel particularly passionate about one candidate or another.

- Or, we may feel anxious, not knowing who to vote for, not really feeling that any candidate fully reflects Catholic teaching.

- Yet we know that our loyalty is first to God and his laws.

- Thus, the bishops warn us, in their statement, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, that: ***As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths (no. 14).***

- The Catholic social teaching framework “does not easily fit ideologies of ‘right’ or ‘left,’ ‘liberal’ or ‘conservative,’ or the platform of any political party” (no. 55).

- Our loyalty is ultimately to God and the values of our faith and this can make us feel like we are “between two worlds”

The unborn child. The poor family. The elderly person. The immigrant in our midst.. We are called to give special attention to those who are vulnerable or marginalized in any way. In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops highlight these pressing issues that affect our neighbors:

- **Abortion** and other threats to life and dignity.

- Efforts to force Catholic ministries to violate their **consciences** or stop serving those in need;

- Efforts to redefine **marriage** and undermine marriage as between one man and one woman and an institution essential to the common good;
- An **economic crisis** which has devastated lives and livelihoods, and the duty to respond in ways that protect the **poor** and future generations;
- The failure to repair a broken **immigration** system in ways that respect the law, human rights, the dignity of immigrants and refugees, families, and the common good.

As we prepare to go to the polls this week, we can keep these words from the bishops in mind: *“Catholic voters should use the framework of Catholic teaching to examine candidates’ positions on issues affecting human life and dignity as well as issues of justice and peace, and they 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”* (Living the Gospel of Life, no. 33)” (Faithful Citizenship, 41).

As Catholics, we believe that *“responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation (Faithful Citizenship, 13)*. By voting, we can defend human life and marriage and care for the needs of the most vulnerable members of our society: the unborn, the poor, the unemployed, the elderly, the homeless, and the immigrant. They need us to speak on their behalf.

In their introductory note to *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the bishops note that Catholics must make **“important distinctions among moral issues acknowledging that some of these issues involve the clear obligation to oppose intrinsic evils which can never be justified and that others require action to pursue justice and promote the common good.”** Put your faith in action by voting this Tuesday, September 11th.

Christ calls us to love both God and neighbor. One way we do so is through informed participation in political life. Join me in forming your conscience, praying, reflecting, voting in Tuesday’s election for candidates who support our teachings on life, marriage, poverty, education and immigration.