

## Conscience Formation in front of the Ballot Box

“Politics ... should be about **fundamental moral choices**” *U.S. Bishops, Introduction to Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*

Each one of us will be called to make a choice as we vote in the next elections: so many issues, so much complexity, no perfect formula, and not a great amount of trust in a political process which seems to belong to “politicians”. What are we to do? The Bishops in their statement reminds us that Catholics cannot be **single issue voters**.

A group of concerned Catholics have prepared this booklet after having identified some key issues which will shape our policies for the next few years. Each of these issues has been looked at in the light of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching and do not intend to represent any specific endorsement of candidate or policy. The choice still remains a very individual process which requires formation of our own conscience and discernment in light of the Gospel values.

### **Principles of good discernment:**

#### Getting the Right Information

- Church Teaching: We need to inform ourselves about the Church’s position on all important issues – not just the issues for which we have passion. The U.S. Conference of Bishops publishes every four years a document called ***Faithful Citizenship*** listing the major issues and reminding us of the teachings of the Gospel and of the Church regarding these issues.
- Know the facts. Facts are not opinions: facts are actual data which are sometimes difficult to find. Trust data presented by research groups (i.e. Census Bureau) or reports presented by reputable companies (i.e. Kaiser reports regarding Health Care). Read different opinions, listen to different T.V. or radio stations, and do your own research. Know the positions of candidates on key issues. Do your homework.

#### Use common sense (virtue of prudence)

- Apply moral principles of justice and dignity to particular situations (policies).
- Beware of easy solutions to complex problems.
- Listen to your faith community and integrate it in your decision making process.

#### Use the principle of “Common Good”

- Choose positions and solutions which promote the life, health and dignity of **all** people. If it’s good **for me**, but not for the **community at large**, it’s probably not the right choice!

#### Integrate your political decision (voting) in the context of prayer

- To be disciple of Jesus is hard. His platform was clear: **Care for the poor (today’s unemployed), the widow, the orphan, the stranger (our immigrants). Be Peacemakers! Love your enemy!**