



## **Bishops of Florida Urge Active Faithful Citizenship: *Study, Discuss, Pray and Then Vote on November 7!***

**September 30, 2006**

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As Catholics, we are morally obligated to take action to protect the rights and dignity of all human life. By exercising our right to vote, we are fulfilling our duty not only as U.S. citizens but also as Catholics. It is a responsibility that should be acted on with faith and enthusiasm, and we must take the time to properly prepare ourselves before Election Day on November 7. Those who are ineligible to vote, especially our youth, are encouraged to contribute their own study, prayer and insights about issues in support of the election process.

Each and every one of us has a responsibility to become informed on the relevant issues, especially those issues that address human life and dignity, and protect and promote the welfare of our most vulnerable. "Faithful citizenship calls Catholics to see civic and political responsibilities through the eyes of faith and to bring our moral convictions to public life" (*Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, USCCB, September 2003). As we enter the voting booth, our primary concern should be how these issues will be acted upon by each candidate for office. How does the candidate propose to safeguard the life and well being of each person regardless of age or condition, while advancing the common good of our society?

Before casting our votes, we must seek to: (1) develop a well-formed conscience shaped by fundamental moral principals; (2) consult and become familiar with the sacred and certain teachings of the Church; (3) seek accurate information on issues that impact human life and promote a just society without relying strictly on campaign advertisements or party affiliation; (4) encourage all candidates to clarify their positions on key issues; (5) actively participate in discussions with others, especially our family and those close to us, by respectfully listening and offering our own insight; and (6) seek wisdom through prayer and reflection and rely on the help of the Holy Spirit to guide our voting decisions.

In our preparation, each of us should evaluate candidates by how they will enhance or diminish the life, dignity and rights of the human person. Our Candidate Questionnaire Project is a collaborative effort by the Florida Catholic Conference, *The Florida Catholic* newspaper, the Florida Council of Catholic Women and the Florida State Council of Knights of Columbus to inform the Catholic faithful of candidates positions on areas of concern to the Church. Questions on public policy issues are posed to all gubernatorial, congressional and state candidates in Florida, and all candidates are encouraged to respond. The questions pertain to abortion, embryonic stem cell research, cloning, healthcare, assisted suicide, death penalty, education, undocumented persons, affordable housing, the definition of marriage, U.S. military engagement and the environment. These questions, with responses from candidates in your district, are published in your diocesan edition of *The Florida Catholic* or can be viewed by visiting [www.informedcatholicvoter.org](http://www.informedcatholicvoter.org). Copies are also available through local parishes.

In his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI explains "...the Church is duty-bound to offer, through the purification of reason and through ethical formation, her own specific contribution towards understanding the requirements of justice and achieving them politically." He says further, "The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society...is proper to the lay faithful." Let us act accordingly and use our votes to shape a society that will protect human life, promote family life, pursue social justice and, with charity, work together in solidarity. Each of us has an important role, and our collective efforts can strengthen and renew our state, our nation and our Church.

We urge all to faithfully exercise the right to vote by seeking wisdom, clarity and the Lord's guidance.

**Archbishop John C. Favalora**  
Archdiocese of Miami

**Bishop John J. Nevins**  
Diocese of Venice

**Bishop John H. Ricard, SSJ**  
Diocese of Pensacola/Tallahassee

**Bishop Robert N. Lynch**  
Diocese of St. Petersburg

**Bishop Victor Galeone**  
Diocese of St. Augustine

**Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, JCL**  
Diocese of Palm Beach

**Bishop Thomas G. Wenski**  
Diocese of Orlando

**Coadjutor Bishop Frank J. Dewane**  
Diocese of Venice

**Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estévez**  
Archdiocese of Miami

**Auxiliary Bishop John G. Noonan**  
Archdiocese of Miami