



Be Faithful Citizens! Vote on November 2

“We urge all Catholics to register, vote and become more involved in public life, to protect human life and dignity, and to advance the common good.”

[Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility (USCCB, September 2003)]

1. We, the Bishops of Florida, address these words to everyone in Florida's Catholic community. The Church teaches that every Catholic is called to an active and faith-filled citizenship. We encourage all Catholics who are eligible, to register and vote. We also encourage those who are ineligible, especially our youth, to contribute their own study, prayer and insights in support of the election process.
2. As we prepare for Election Day on November 2, these are important steps for all of us: (1) develop an informed conscience in keeping with the sacred and certain teachings of the Church; (2) seek accurate information on issues that impact human life and shape our culture; (3) consult and be familiar with Church teachings on these issues so that our votes will support our core values; (4) encourage candidates to clarify their positions on these key issues; (5) seek wisdom and guidance through prayer and reflection; (6) actively participate in discussions within family, parish, and in other settings - respectfully listening, and offering our own perceptions to others; and (7) prayerfully and thoughtfully choose by casting our vote, either by absentee ballot or in the voting booth.
3. From a moral perspective, the issues of concern are not always of equal importance or urgency. Some are more fundamental and therefore more pressing than others. Pope John Paul II reminds us in the Gospel of Life, "It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop."
4. In our preparation, each of us should measure candidates and proposed constitutional amendments by how they will safeguard or diminish the life, dignity and rights of the human person. Dignity and rights have no meaning for the person who has been denied life. We should inform the candidates that our values impel us to insist - because of our Lord's own witness to the sacredness of human life - that the killing of an unborn child or vulnerable adult is always intrinsically evil and can never be justified.
5. Many of these concerns will be acted upon by our elected officials during their terms of office. We should determine what policies the candidate, if elected, would pursue to protect the lives of our most vulnerable, and whether that same candidate would address other pressing concerns in ways that respect the inviolability of life at every stage from conception to natural death. How does the candidate propose to protect the life and wellbeing of each person regardless of age or condition, while advancing the common good of our society?
6. Our Candidate Questionnaire Program has posed questions to presidential, congressional, and state candidates in Florida and their responses have been sought. The questions include these issues of concern for the Church: abortion, embryonic stem cell research, cloning, healthcare, assisted suicide, death penalty, education, undocumented persons, affordable housing, federal minimum wage, the definition of marriage and the environment. This questionnaire is a collaborative effort of the Florida Catholic Conference, The Florida Catholic newspaper, the Florida Council of Catholic Women and the Knights of Columbus. You may view the questions with responses from candidates in your district in the October 28 issue of The Florida Catholic newspaper, or by going to www.flacathconf.org. Copies of the questionnaire are also available through local parishes.

7. Several proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution will appear on the November 2 ballot. We have issued statements in support of Amendment One on Parental Notification of Abortion, and in opposition to Amendment Four on Slot Machines. The statements may be viewed at www.flacathconf.org.

8. In our tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political processes a moral obligation. Let us share our values with a strong voice 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 our nation and renew our Church. Study, discuss, pray, vote and take someone with you to the voting booth!

9. In humility, we seek God's love and blessings on our cherished state and nation.

Archbishop John C. Favalora
Archdiocese of Miami

Bishop John J. Nevins
Diocese of Venice

Bishop Norbert M. Dorsey, CP
Diocese of Orlando

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

Coadjutor Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Diocese of Orlando

Auxiliary Bishop Felipe J. Estevez
Archdiocese of Miami