



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE of ORANGE

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States identify the four main principles of the Church's social teaching and apply them to some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this often challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all interrelated.



Dignity of the Human Person - Because each human person is created in the image and likeness of God, each one of us possesses innate and inviolable human dignity. The dignity of the human person is the foundation for a moral vision of society. As we seek to imitate the Good Samaritan and become neighbor to all, we must work to protect the dignity of all, especially those who are most vulnerable. (See Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no.107)

Common Good - The Common Good is "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (Catechism, no.1906). Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met.

Solidarity - Solidarity is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no.38). We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. The person is social in nature; we develop and flourish within a community. As baptized members of the community of the Church, we are part of one body in Christ and we are also part of one global human family (Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no.25b).

Subsidiarity - Larger institutions in society should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when the more local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, and advance the common good (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no.48).

It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in Church life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do our best to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. Thus equipped, and further impelled by our sense of patriotism, we exercise our right and duty to vote and otherwise to participate actively in public life (Catechism, nos.2239-40). By forming our consciences for faithful citizenship, we can better pursue the common good and thus obey the command of our Lord to love our neighbors.

More resources at: faithfulcitizenship.org Info on Voting in Orange County: ocvote.gov/voting