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## Sample talk to promote the Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network (I-CAN)

In a few minutes we will conclude this Mass as we always do with these words: the Mass is ended, GO in peace to love and serve the Lord! Today's Gospel, and all the Gospels, call us to love and serve the Lord not only here at Mass, but after we leave here.

But how are we to do that? Let me talk about one way – don't worry. It does not involve money.

Today, I would like to introduce you to what the Illinois bishops are calling the Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network, or I-CAN.

I am going to ask you to provide your contact information so you can receive updates about legislative issues being discussed in Springfield at the state capitol. We are doing this today to help respond to the call of the Gospel which reminds us that responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in the political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do.

At this time I would like you to take one of the pencils and I-CAN cards at the end of the pews, fill it out and please give it to one of the ushers who be collecting them at the conclusion of my talk.

You may not be aware of this, but through the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) our Church has representatives advocating to promote the common good at the state capitol in Springfield. Since 1969, CCI has monitored legislation and the state budget, advocating for just decisions from our lawmakers with regard to the state budget and state laws. CCI has been a strong voice for Catholic schools, social justice, health care, protecting the unborn, and many other issues. I am asking you to fill out the card to lend your voice because it is our obligation to be engaged in the political process. Pope Benedict XVI stated in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*,

The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice.

Now some may say that there is a separation of church and state, and that we should not be involved in "political issues".

The Church does not endorse candidates from either party – the themes from Catholic Social Teaching provide a moral framework that do not easily fit ideologies of "right" or "left," "liberal" or "conservative" or the platform of any political party. We are not partisan or sectarian, but reflect fundamental ethical principles that are common to all people. Our faith speaks the truth. We seek to promote the common good, and we do this through engagement in the political process.

Over the last few years and in recent months, we have endured many challenges, but it has not changed the fundamental mission and message of Catholics in public life. In times of terror and war, of global insecurity and economic uncertainty, of disrespect for human life and human dignity, we need to return to moral principles. Politics cannot be merely about ideological conflict, the search for partisan advantage, or political contributions. It should be about fundamental moral choices.

How do we protect human life and dignity?

How do we fairly share the blessing and burdens of the challenges we face?

What kind of state do we want to be?

Over the years CCI has done a good job of representing our interests and expressing our values to lawmakers, but recently it has become apparent that our voice needs to be both louder and stronger. It needs to be louder and stronger to give our elected officials the strength and support necessary to build a more just society.

Anyone who remotely follows some of the embarrassing developments in recent years knows our state could use some clarity and improvements in its ability to make more sound decisions.

Please take the time to get involved. Find out more about the issues from a Catholic perspective. Fulfill our obligation to participate in the political process and to go in peace to love and serve the Lord.