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The 2014 Election

This November we will have the opportunity to cast our ballot in order to help shape the direction of our country and our state for the next two years and beyond.

Election season offers us the opportunity to reflect on the issues affecting our state and our nation, and to decide who will represent us during the next few years. Obviously, there are a number of ways each of us determines how to cast our ballot, but as bishops and teachers of the faith we recommend that you take the time to review the principles in [Faithful Citizenship](#). You can go to www.ilcatholic.org for a copy.

John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States said, “Always vote on principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost.”

Practicing Faithful Citizenship flows from a well-formed conscience. What do we mean when we refer to “conscience”? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1777, “Moral conscience, present at the heart of the person, enjoins him at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil. It also judges particular choices, approving those that are good and denouncing those that are evil. It bears witness to the authority of truth in reference to the supreme Good to which the human person is drawn, and it welcomes the commandments. When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.” Conscience is the carrier of truth, not of self-will.

This note, obviously, will not tell you whom to vote for, but it will help you to reflect on the issues and the person that can best promote the common good. Reflecting on principles and practicing Faithful Citizenship is not easy. It will require serious Catholics to inform themselves of the issues important to the Faithful Citizen and to act accordingly. Some information can be found at www.ilcatholic.org to assist you.

Forming one’s conscience as outlined above means taking to mind and heart the Gospel and the teachings of Jesus Christ. As Catholics, we must evaluate candidates’ positions based on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching in order to determine who will best guide our state and our nation.

Not all issues carry equal moral weight. Catholics may disagree on practical policies that call for prudential judgment, such as how to best care for the poor, how to welcome the immigrant, or how to eradicate racism. However, there are other policies that encourage intrinsically evil acts and can never be supported.

The right to life is a commandment from God, an inherent and a fundamental moral principle. It is a primary right through which all other rights flow. The willful destruction of human life through abortion, human embryo experimentation and destruction, and assisted suicide represent intrinsically evil policies. Catholics with a well-formed conscience would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil if they were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate’s permissive stance on these policies. On the difficult occasion where both candidates accept an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter may consider each candidates’ integrity and commitments, and determine which would be less likely to advance a morally flawed position and more likely to promote other authentic human goods.

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