



Catholic Conference  
of Illinois

# Election 2012 Election 2012

This is the third of four bulletin inserts to offer guidance and reflection points from Illinois' Catholic Bishops in preparation for the elections of November 6, 2012. The first insert was an introduction to this effort. The second insert discussed the expectations of a well-formed conscience. (Go to [www.ilcatholic.org](http://www.ilcatholic.org) for a copy of the first and second insert.)

“Christ...fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.”  
—*Gaudium et Spes*, 22

As followers of Jesus Christ, we understand the human person in light of the mystery of the Incarnation. HUMAN DIGNITY flows both from our origin (being created in the image and likeness of God) and from our ultimate destiny, which is communion with God. Legitimate concern for the material well-being of all must never eclipse our concern for their spiritual and moral well-being. [Matthew 10:28]

The preciousness of every human being demands our concern for well-being of all, beginning with those closest to us for whom we bear the greatest responsibility, and with a special concern for the weakest and most vulnerable among us and for future generations.

The moral imperative to respond to the fundamental needs of our neighbors—needs such as food, shelter, basic health care, education, and meaningful work—is universally binding on our conscience, but may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means. These responsibilities cannot be simply delegated to the State.<sup>1</sup>

As the *Catechism* reminds us, “It is not the role of the Pastors of the Church to intervene directly in the political structuring and organization of social life. This task is part of the vocation of the lay faithful, acting on their own initiative with their fellow citizens.”<sup>2</sup> Relying on well-formed consciences, Catholics citizens must use prudence in responding to these needs and serving the COMMON GOOD.

While there may be many legitimate ways to address the needs of our neighbors, there are some actions which are always and everywhere immoral. As Catholics, we must recognize that not all issues carry the same moral weight. The continuing slaughter of innocent children through legal abortion—to take the most appalling example of such “intrinsic evil”—is a grave offense against God and our own human dignity, and cries out for justice. Accordingly, “the moral obligation to oppose intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions.”<sup>3</sup>

Those who knowingly, willingly and directly support public policies or legislation that protect and perpetuate such injustice cooperate with that grave evil. Candidates who promise to support the common good, while at the same time glossing over their support for intrinsic evils such as abortion, perpetrate a lie. Catholic candidates who do so are also a cause of scandal among the faithful.

Finally, two other issues of particular importance in this election year demand our attention. The first is marriage: the permanent, faithful relationship of a man and a woman as husband and wife is the root of a family and the foundation for all of society. The decline of marriage in our culture has already inflicted untold spiritual and material costs upon society and individuals alike. Attempts to redefine marriage are contrary to the natural and moral law and only serve to further erode this fundamental institution. The defense of marriage is a matter of social justice. The second issue—which is of such pressing importance that the final insert, beginning on October 28<sup>th</sup>, will address it specifically—is religious freedom. Additional information can be found on the Catholic Conference of Illinois website, [www.ilcatholic.org](http://www.ilcatholic.org) or at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org).

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<sup>1</sup> *Caritas in Veritate*, 38

<sup>2</sup> CCC, 2442

<sup>3</sup> Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, 37