



September

Topic: Using the Pastoral Circle

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility is all about our political responsibility in voting prudently. There are many concerns, there are many issues of human life and dignity. Having a tool that can be used to identify the issue and analyze it as well as apply the Gospel and Catholic Social Teaching could help many people. During September, we then present the pastoral circle as a tool. On one side of the insert is a general model and on the backside is an example using health care. No answer is given. Questions are posed for each individual to reflect and seek information.

There is a more elaborate explanation of the pastoral circle in the resource section (part 3) of this packet. You can make copies and have them available in a literature rack for those who want more information.

Resources:

Bulletin Insert

The Pastoral Circle

Quotes and thoughts for a *Faithful Citizenship* corner of the parish weekly bulletin

Homily suggestions



Using the Pastoral Circle for Reflection on Issues

II. Analyze

1. What are the socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the challenge of this issue or concern? Which are most important in finding a solution or a way of helping those most affected?
2. What are the root causes?
3. What challenges are we facing because of this issue?

I. Reading the Signs of the Times or Immersion Experience

1. Are the most vulnerable affected by this issue or concern?
2. What are your experiences of this issue or concern?
3. To what information have you been exposed?
4. Why are you concerned?
5. How are you affected?
6. Who else is affected?
7. What does it say about us as a society and the way we care for the least?

III. Theological Reflection

1. What does Catholic Social Teaching say to us?
2. What does our sacramental theology tell us about who we are, care of all people and the earth, and reconciliation?
3. What do we learn from statements of popes and bishops on matters concerning this issue?
4. What do we learn from the gospel and the life of Christ?

IV. Take Action

1. In keeping with the reflection, and being realistic, what beginning actions can you take:
 - as individuals?
 - as a group?
 - as a parish?
2. How can you join with organized efforts to take action?
3. What would Jesus do? How could you take this action?
4. How did your socio-economic and political analysis help you to target where action needs to take place or who needs to be influenced?
5. How can you get others involved?
6. In an election year, how might this issue influence your decision in regard to the common good?



Using the Pastoral Circle for Reflection on Healthcare

For more on the Catholic Bishops' Position, visit www.usccb.org.

US Catholic Bishops' criteria: respect for life, priority concern for the poor, universal access, comprehensive benefits, pluralism, quality, cost controls, equitable financing.



II. Analyze

What are the socioeconomic, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the challenge of providing basic human needs such health care?

What are the root causes of some of this issue?

What drives the cost of health care?

What challenges do the working poor face when trying to stay healthy? What happens when they have emergencies?

How are some of these challenges spilling over to the middle class?

What about hard to insure children such as downs over 25? Or children with asthma? Or...

I. Reading the Signs of the Times or Immersion Experience

1. Who do you feel is not covered by healthcare insurance?

2. Have you ever had an accident or needed medical care that required a hospital stay? What did it cost you out of pocket? How were you able to afford it (or not)?

3. What would happen if you had a major catastrophe or unplanned medical expense?

III. Theological Reflection

1. What does Catholic Social Teaching say to us?

2. What does the gospel teach us about caring for one another?

3. What do we learn from statements of popes and bishops on matters of the dignity of all people, the dignity of the worker, the option for the poor, health care as a basic right?

4. How does our theology of Eucharist and how we celebrate as community shape us in caring for one another?

IV. Take Action

1. In keeping with the reflection, and being realistic, what beginning actions can you take:

as individuals?

as a group?

as a parish?

2. How can you join with organized efforts to take action?

3. There are a number of safety nets like SCHIP, food stamps, and Medicaid up for reauthorization. How can you learn more and get involved? In our state, health care is a huge part of the state budget. Are we doing enough in the most efficient way, especially concerning children?

The Faithful Citizenship Corner

Quotes and Thoughts for the Weekly Bulletin

September 6/7, 2008

Human life is sacred. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable, at any Stage or in any condition. In our society, human life is especially under direct attack from abortion. Other direct threats to the sanctity of human life include euthanasia, human cloning, and the destruction of human embryos for research. Catholic teaching about the dignity of life calls us to oppose torture, unjust war, and the use of the death penalty; to prevent genocide and attacks against noncombatants; to oppose racism; and to overcome poverty and suffering. Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts... (FC, #44-45)

September 13/14, 2008

The human person is not only sacred but also social. Full human development takes place in relationship with others. The family—based on marriage between a man and a woman—is the first and fundamental unit of society and is a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. (FC, #46)

September 20/21, 2008

How we organize our society—in economics and politics, in law and policy—directly affects the common good and the capacity of individuals to develop their full potential. Every person and association has a right and a duty to participate actively in shaping society and to promote the well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. (FC, #47)

September 27/28, 2008

The principle of subsidiarity reminds us that 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. (FC, #48)

Homily Hints

We provide these hints so that you might choose one week to highlight the topic of the month. The bulletin insert we have provided can be used any week of your choosing this month. We only ask one week a month for Faithful Citizenship to be highlighted. We all need to reflect on our political choices and what it means to be a prudent voter. In order to do so, we must be prepared, participate in discussions of the issues, question candidates, and understand Catholic Social Teaching.

As noted previously, the Catholic approach to faithful citizenship rests on moral principles found in Scripture and Catholic moral and social teaching as well as in the hearts of all people of good will. (FC, #43)

September 6/7, 2008 Readings: Ezekiel 33: 7-9; Romans 13: 8-10; Matthew 18: 15-20

In the first reading we are called to call attention to wrong doing. We need to proclaim a sense of integrity to the Way of Jesus. We are called by the bishops to have this sense of integrity to the gospel and Catholic Social Teaching in the political arena.

September 13/14, 2008 Readings: Numbers 21: 4-9; Philippians 2: 6-11; John 3: 13-17

Here we have the greatest gift and incredible model of faithfulness in Jesus. This great love needs to be modeled in our lives. It is easier to do so on a personal basis, but we are called to more than that. We need to care about the least in society. It is the way to live out that love. Being able to analyze issues and theologically reflect on them gives us a better picture of what we can do.

September 20/21, 2008 Readings: Isaiah 55: 6-9; Philippians 1: 20-24, 27; Matthew 20: 1-16

Prayer is a necessary part of conscience formation and voting prudently. It is in relationship with Jesus that we are inspired to do the right thing. It is in that relationship that we find the courage to speak out on issues. As we see from the gospel, it is about seeing the need and doing something for those in need.

September 27/28, 2008 Readings: Ezekiel 18: 25-28; Philippians 2: 1-11; Matthew 21: 28-32

There is always hope. We can always change our ways and follow the love and compassion of Jesus. Let us make this election one in which we truly seek the common good and protection of the most vulnerable among us. Let us look at issues and policies, and not parties. Let us find a new way of voting that speaks of life in the many ways we need. Let us support families and the elderly. Let us seek ways of peace.



October

Topic: Applying Catholic Social Teaching to Issues

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility is all about our political responsibility in voting prudently. There are many concerns, there are many issues of human life and dignity. As responsible Catholics, we must use prudence with a well-formed conscience in making decisions. During October, we then answer the questions: How does Catholic Social Teaching inform our consciences on issues? What else is needed? Information is taken from the Bishops' new document on Faithful Citizenship. The paragraph numbers from the full text of the bishops' document are given in parentheses.

Resources:

Bulletin Insert

Applying Catholic Social Teaching to Major Issues

Quotes and thoughts for a *Faithful Citizenship* corner of the parish weekly bulletin

Homily suggestions



APPLYING CATHOLIC TEACHING TO MAJOR ISSUES: A SUMMARY OF POLICY POSITIONS OF THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

“Politics is about values and issues as well as candidates and officeholders. In this brief summary, we bishops call attention to issues with significant moral dimensions that should be carefully considered in each campaign and as policy decisions are made in the years to come. As the descriptions below indicate, some issues involve principles that can never be violated, such as the fundamental right to life. Others reflect our judgment about the best way to apply Catholic principles to policy issues.” (#63)

Some resources are suggested under each topic. More is available at www.usccb.org.

Human Life

“Our 1998 statement *Living the Gospel of Life* declares, “Abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all others” (no. 5). Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed. Cloning and destruction of human embryos for research or even for potential cures are always wrong. The purposeful taking of human life by assisted suicide and euthanasia is not an act of mercy, but an unjustifiable assault on human life. Genocide, torture, and the direct and intentional targeting of noncombatants in war or terrorist attacks are always wrong.” (#64)

A Matter of the Heart: A Statement on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, 2002 (www.usccb.org/prolife/heart.shtml)
Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities: A Campaign in Support of Life, 2001 (www.usccb.org/prolife/pastoralplan.shtml)
Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics, 1998 (www.usccb.org/prolife/gospel.shtml)

Family Life

“The family is the basic cell of human society. The role, responsibilities, and needs of families should be central national priorities. Marriage must be defined, recognized, and protected as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman, and as the source of the next generation and the protective haven for children. Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should help families stay together and should reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. Wages should allow workers to support their families, and public assistance should be available to help poor families to live in dignity. Such assistance should be provided in a manner that promotes eventual financial autonomy.” (#70)

“Children are to be valued, protected, and nurtured. As a Church, we affirm our commitment to the protection and well-being of children in our own institutions and in all of society. “ (71)

Issues include education, parents’ rights, social and economic policies, healthcare, housing, media, internet, support of the family, to name a few.

National Directory for Catechesis, 2005 (www.usccb.org/education/ndc/index.shtml)
Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 1998
(www.usccb.org/sdwp/projects/socialteaching/socialteaching.shtml)
When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women, 2002 (www.usccb.org/laity/help.shtml)
A Family Perspective in Church and Society, 1998 (www.usccb.org/laity/marriage/family.shtml)

Social Justice

“Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Social and economic policies should foster the creation of jobs for all who can work with decent working conditions and just wages. ... Workers, owners, employers, and unions should work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good.” (#76)

“**Welfare policy** should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families leave poverty through work, training, and assistance with child care, health care, housing, and transportation. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work.” (#77)

“**Faith-based groups** deserve recognition and support, not as a substitute for government, but as responsive, effective partners, especially in the poorest communities and countries.” (#78)

“**Social Security** should provide adequate, continuing, and reliable income in an equitable manner for low- and average-wage workers and their families when these workers retire or become disabled, and for the survivors when a wage-earner dies.” (#79)

“Affordable and accessible **health care** is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right. With an estimated 47 million Americans lacking health care coverage, it is also an urgent national priority.” (#80)

“The lack of safe, **affordable housing** requires a renewed commitment to increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships, especially with religious groups and community organizations.” (#81)

“A first priority for **agriculture policy** should be food security for all.” (#82)

“The Gospel mandate to “**welcome the stranger**” requires Catholics to care for and stand with immigrants, both documented and undocumented, including immigrant children.” (#83)

“All persons have a right to receive a **quality education**. Young people, including those who are poor and those with disabilities, need to have the opportunity to develop intellectually, morally, spiritually, and physically, allowing them to become good citizens who make socially and morally responsible decisions.” (#84)

“It is important for our society to continue to **combat discrimination** based on race, religion, sex, ethnicity, disabling condition, or age, as these are grave injustices and affronts to human dignity.” (#86)

“**Care for the earth and for the environment** is a moral issue. Protecting the land, water, and the air we share is a religious duty of stewardship and reflects our responsibility to born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental assault.” (#87)

Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope, 2003 (www.usccb.org/mrs/stranger.shtml)

A Place at the Table: A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children, 2002 (www.usccb.org/bishops/table.shtml)

Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (Fourth Edition), 2001 (www.usccb.org/bishops/directives.shtml)

Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence, and the Common Good, 2001

(www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.shtml)

Global Solidarity

“A more just world will likely be a more peaceful world, a world less vulnerable to terrorism and other violence. The United States has the responsibility to take the lead in addressing the scandal of poverty and underdevelopment. Our nation should help to humanize globalization, addressing its negative consequences and spreading its benefits, especially among the world's poor. The United States also has a unique opportunity to use its power in partnership with others to build a more just and peaceful world.” (#88)

A Call to Solidarity with Africa, 2001 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/africa.shtml)

A Jubilee Call for Debt Forgiveness, 1999 (www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/adminstm.shtml)

The Faithful Citizenship Corner

Quotes and Thoughts for the Weekly Bulletin

October 4/5, 2008

When all candidates hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter faces a dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods.(FC, #36)

October 11/12, 2008

It is important to be clear that the political choices faced by citizens not only have an impact on general peace and prosperity but also may affect the individual's salvation. Similarly, the kinds of laws and policies supported by public officials affect their spiritual well-being. Pope Benedict XVI, in his recent reflection on the Eucharist as "the sacrament of charity," challenged all of us to adopt what he calls "a Eucharistic form of life." This means that the redeeming love we encounter in the Eucharist should shape our thoughts, our words, and our decisions, including those that pertain to the social order. (FC, #38)

October 18/19, 2008

The consistent ethic of life provides a moral framework for principled Catholic engagement in political life and, rightly understood, neither treats all issues as morally equivalent nor reduces Catholic teaching to one or two issues. It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God. It unites us as a "people of life and for life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 6) pledged to build what Pope John Paul II called a "culture of life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 77). (FC, #40)

October 25/26, 2008

As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet a candidate's position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support. As noted previously, the Catholic approach to faithful citizenship rests on moral principles found in Scripture and Catholic moral and social teaching as well as in the hearts of all people of good will. We now present central and enduring themes of the Catholic social tradition that can provide a moral framework for decisions in public life. (FC, #42-43)

Homily Hints

We are near the end of the church year. Therefore, our readings focus on the vision of God and our reality. We are called to reflect on what we have been doing. The readings contrast the banquet God creates for us with our lack of acceptance of it as seen in the choices we make in this world.

Integrating the issues of Faithful Citizenship into the readings has the same message no matter what week is chosen:

God wants peace for us. God wants us to take responsibility for our world in bringing that peace. As Pope Paul VI said, "If you want peace, work for justice." What we see happening is a result of our choices. And we can change if we start listening to the word of God. Now is the time to reflect on the gospel and Catholic Social Teaching and vote with prudence. But, it doesn't stop there. We need to continue to work for justice and live the gospel of love.

October 4/5, 2008

Readings: Isaiah 5:1-7; Philippians 4:6-9; Matthew 21:33-43

October 11/12, 2008

Readings: Isaiah 25: 6-10a; Philippians 4: 10-14, 19-20; Matthew 22: 1-14

October 18/19, 2008

Readings: Isaiah 45: 1, 4-6; 1 Thessalonians 1: 1-5ab; Matthew 22: 15-21

October 25/26, 2008

Readings: Exodus 22: 21-27; 1 Thessalonians 1: 5c-10; Matthew 22: 34-40