

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the frame, creating a modern, layered effect. The central area is a plain white space where the text is located.

What Does Politics Have to Do with *My* Faith?

A word about the Virginia Catholic Conference

- The legislative advocacy office of VA's bishops/dioceses (www.vacatholic.org)
- Responsibilities
- Grassroots advocacy: Text VCC to 50457 to join network, or visit www.vacatholic.org

Why should I care about politics?

- Gospels: Love of neighbor
- *Catechism* (No. 1915): “As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life.”
- U.S. Bishops: *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (www.faithfulcitizenship.org)
- WE ARE CALLED TO BE INVOLVED!

Conscience Formation

- “voice of God resounding in the human heart” (Faithful Citizenship, no. 17)
- Elements:
 - 1) Study Scripture and Church teaching
 - 2) Examine facts and background info
 - 3) Prayerful reflection to discern the will of God

What principles should guide our involvement?

- The Dignity of the Human Person
- Subsidiarity
- The Common Good
- Solidarity

The Dignity of the Human Person

“[R]espect for the dignity of every person ... is the core of Catholic moral and social teaching” (*Faithful Citizenship*, no. 10).

Subsidiarity

- “[L]arger 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, no. 48).
- Human person: sacred and social
- “Full human development takes place in relationship with others.” (no. 46)

The Common Good

- “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26).
- Rights: “Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access those things required for human decency - food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life” (FC, no. 49).
- Responsibilities: to one another, to our families, and to society
- “The economy must serve people, not the other way around” (no. 50).
- Duty to care for God’s creation (Pope Francis: “our common home”)

Solidarity

- We are one human family.
- We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers.
- Preferential option for the poor

Doing Good and Avoiding Evil

Intrinsically evil actions: “always incompatible with love of God and neighbor” (no. 22)

- Examples: Abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, genocide, racism, treating the poor as disposable, redefining marriage to deny its essential meaning
- Intrinsically evil acts have “a special claim on our consciences and our actions” (no. 37).
- Abortion is the “preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed” (FC, Introductory Letter).
- More than 61 million in US since 1973

Obligation does not end at opposing intrinsically evil actions; must also seek the best ways to respond to our neighbors’ needs (e.g., food, shelter, health care, education, meaningful work).

“Both opposing evil *and* doing good are essential obligations” (no. 24)

Two Temptations

Two temptations can distort Church's defense of life and dignity:

- 1) Failing to recognize differences in moral gravity among issues - "The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many" (no. 28).
- 2) Misusing these necessary moral distinctions to dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity - not optional concerns

"We are not factions, but one family of faith fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ" (no. 29).

Consistent Ethic of Life

- Does not treat all issues as morally equivalent
- Does not reduce Catholic teaching to one or two issues
- Anchors commitment to defend life in the moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God
- Begins with “preeminent obligation to protect innocent life from direct attack and extends to defending life whenever it is threatened or diminished” (no. 40).

What can we do?

- Form our consciences
- Pray (for those affected, for our leaders, etc.)
- Vote (once or twice a year) - tip of iceberg!
 - FC, nos. 34-42 (www.faithfulcitizenship.org)
 - VA bishops' letter
 - VCC Presidential Candidate Comparison
- Advocate (365 days a year) - sign up for VCC alert network! (www.vacatholic.org)
- Look for ways to learn from and educate others, out of love and with civility.