

to teach



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Does Your Vote Matter?

The national elections are fast approaching with no shortage of issues to grab our attention. The economy, health care, terrorism, military conflicts, taxation, and crime can seem overwhelming enough to cause us to wonder if one vote matters all that much. Can your involvement in the political process really make a difference?

The bishops' answer is an unqualified "yes." In their statement *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, they remind us that every Catholic should be an active and faith-filled citizen. The decisions we make about whom and what to vote for should be based upon a well-formed conscience that witnesses to the Church's centuries-old commitment to human life and dignity.

As Catholic educators, we have a particular responsibility to help students grow in their understanding of civic responsibility based on the teachings and example of Jesus. In this issue of *To Teach*, we will look at what these responsibilities entail and how we can incorporate them into lessons, liturgies, and the everyday life of classroom and playground. In the process, we look at how we can more fully embrace our own roles as citizens living in a democratic society.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A FAITHFUL CITIZEN

Every four years the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issues a statement on the responsibilities of Catholics in society. It is not an endorsement of any particular political party or candidate—something that is prohibited by law and inappropriate for an institution as diverse as the Catholic Church. Instead it raises questions and examines issues in light of Catholic values, providing a guide for voters to discern their choices. In a much broader sense, it reminds us of our ongoing responsibility to live as faith-filled citizens.

For principals and teachers in Catholic schools, the materials to support the *Faithful Citizenship* campaign provide a wealth of resources to share with students and their families and as a faculty. Here is a look at some of these materials and how you can put them to good use in your school.

Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

In this statement, the bishops note that the Catholic community is not an "interest group." Instead, the Church raises questions about the

moral and human dimensions of the choices that voters and candidates face.

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Using a highlighter, go through the statement and mark questions to pose to students and their families.
- Select one or two to use as a discussion starter or the basis of a writing contest.

Faithful Citizenship (video)

This ten-minute video reviews the themes of *Faithful Citizenship*. It notes that the moral test of government rests on how we treat people in three major areas of life: the dawn (children), the twilight (elderly), and the shadows (the handicapped, poor, and disadvantaged.)

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Using these themes, engage your students in a discussion or research project.
- Help students create a classroom bulletin or newspaper, listing the ways our government is responding well in these three areas and where some challenges still remain.
- Share the information with parents and the rest of the school.

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Quick Quiz: *Solidarity requires that . . .*

- a) we care about others no matter where they live or how different they appear.
- b) charity begins at home.
- c) all persons need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps.
- d) all people need to have equal incomes.
- e) all of the above.

For the answer, turn to page 3.

The Challenge of Faithful Citizenship (brochure)

A great summary of *Faithful Citizenship* to use with your class.

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Hand out a copy to each student and send it home to their parents.
- With middle- and high-school students, use the ten questions in the brochure as a basis for a class discussion or debate.

WEB-BASED RESOURCES

Visit www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship for the following resources.

A Family Guide to Faithful Citizenship

This guide contains a number of interesting activities for households to complete together.

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Copy this family guide, and send it home with students.
- Encourage parents to use the guide at home and to share the results with you.

Planning Ideas for Parish Staffs and Parish Councils

These planning ideas include what parishes and schools are allowed to do along with a list of activities to avoid.

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Distribute this summary of political activities to school and parish leaders.
- Use the list of Do's and Don'ts for faculty discussions, and share it with parents and others as a way to set parameters around your school's involvement in political activity.

Lesson Plans for Schools

This section includes lesson plans for elementary and high school classes plus photo-copy-ready handouts.

HOW CAN I USE THIS?

- Copy the "Deciphering Exercise" handout, and complete with class.
- Post a link to this site on your

THE BOOKSTORE

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility Faithful Citizenship

This statement highlights four areas of special concern—protecting human life, promoting family life, pursuing social justice, and practicing global solidarity.

English: No. 5-561, 40 pp.

Spanish: No. 5-894, 40 pp.

1-9 copies, \$3.95 each

10-24 copies, \$3.50 each

25+ copies, \$2.95 each

THE CHALLENGE OF FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP (BROCHURE)

A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility

A brief summary of Catholic teaching on political responsibility.

English: No. 5-562, 50/\$12.00

Spanish: No. 5-895, 50/\$12.00

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP (VIDEOTAPE)

A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility Politics for the Common Good

Faithful Citizenship emphasizes that Catholics have a moral obligation to participate in the political process—to vote, to get involved, and to seek the common good.

No. 5-563, 9 min., \$10.95

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

A Catholic Recommitment to Overcome Poverty and to Respect the Dignity of All God's Children: A Pastoral Reflection of the U.S. Catholic Bishops

English: No. 5-519, 36 pp., \$3.95

Spanish: No. 5-880, 40 pp., \$3.95

FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP KIT

A Resource for Parishes

Use this kit filled with the practical resources to educate those in your parish, school, and local community about the importance of bringing Catholic values into public life through active citizenship. Visit www.usccb.org/publishing and click on "printed materials" to see the content listing of this kit.

No. 5-560, \$5.95

SHARING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING: CHALLENGES AND DIRECTIONS

Highlights of the seven major themes of Catholic social teaching that provides recommendations for incorporating it in all forms of Catholic education and formation.

English: No. 5-281, 32 pp., \$3.95

Spanish: No. 5-803, 32 pp., \$3.95

EXCERPTS FROM "SHARING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING"

Cards and posters that summarize the seven key themes. These serve as guidelines for involvement in public life.

Card: English: No. 5-315, 50/\$10.00;

Spanish: No. 5-815, 50/\$10.00

Poster: English: No. 5-318, \$2.00;

Spanish: No. 5-818, \$2.00

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JESUS

Catholic Social Teaching at Work Today

A video that presents an overview of the seven themes of Catholic Social Teaching.

English: No. 5-444, 28 min., \$14.95

Spanish: No. 5-891, 28 min., \$14.95

When ordering, use the code "F618" on your order form or give this code to the sales representative. Quantity discounts are available on all publications. Call toll-free 800-235-8722 for more information. To order these resources or to obtain a free catalog of other USCCB titles, call toll-free 800-235-8722. In the Washington metropolitan area or from outside the United States, call 202-722-8716. Visit the bishops' Internet site located at www.usccb.org. Para pedidos en español, llame al 800-235-8722 y presione 4 para hablar con un representante del servicio al cliente, en español.



WAYS TO PROMOTE FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP AMONG STUDENTS & FAMILIES

for Principals & School Boards

- Distribute copies of *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility* to all faculty and school board members. Discuss the three major assets that the Catholic community brings to the public arena. How does your school possess these assets, and how do you share them with the broader community?
- With a family advisory group, brainstorm various ways to promote voter registration and educational efforts among parents of your students.
- Distribute copies of *The Challenge to Faithful Citizenship* brochure at a gathering of parents. Invite parents to discuss in small groups one of the ten questions posed in the brochure. Compile the results in the large group, and post them on the parish or school website.
- Partner with neighboring schools to plan an in-service for faculties on the message of *Faithful Citizenship* and how it can be woven into classroom lessons and activities.
- Post voter education ideas on a school website or in your fall newsletter. Provide information on where to seek out the position a candidate has taken on various issues regarding human life and dignity. Check with the League of Women's Voters or a local newspaper for coverage of candidates and ballot initiatives.
- At a faculty or school board meeting, use the closing prayer in the "Ideas for Liturgists and Prayer Leaders" pamphlet that is included in the *Faithful Citizenship Kit* or at www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship.
- Select five or six quotes from the bulletin quotes and clip art brochure in the *Faithful Citizenship Kit* or at www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship. Use these at faculty meetings as a way to encourage dialogue and interest in the faithful citizenship concept.
- View the *Faithful Citizenship* video and use the study guide reflection questions as a focus of a faculty, PTA/PTO, or school board meeting.

for Educators

- Use current events and news stories to stimulate discussion and interest around the seven themes of Catholic social teaching. Distribute copies of *Excerpts from "Sharing Catholic Social Teaching"* as a resource for the discussion. Brainstorm solutions to problems related to poverty, injustice, or the environment. Talk about ways government can and should help alleviate these problems.
- Use the General Intercessions and music ideas from the pamphlet "Ideas for Liturgists and Prayer Leaders" in the *Faithful Citizenship Kit* in classroom or school liturgies. Starting with the week of October 17, include all candidates and voters in your classroom prayer intentions.
- Review upcoming lessons in geography, history, social studies, or science, and look for ways to incorporate points about faithful citizenship.
- Review with students these four "legs" that the bishops define as holding up a table (from *A Place at the Table*) designed to help the poor: families and individuals, communities and faith-based organizations, businesses and market place, and government. Talk about ways these four legs contribute to helping poor people who need health care, food, or adequate housing.
- Have students devise a list of five questions they would like to ask local or national political candidates. Relate these to the issues of life and Catholic values raised by the bishops.
- Create an "issue" for the school, such as expanding the playground, creating a rule about behavior in the cafeteria, or changing the dress code guidelines. Brainstorm a list of pros and cons related to the issue based on Catholic social teaching. Then hold a mock election and discuss the end result.
- Go to www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship, and select one of the lessons for primary or secondary grades. Team up with another class in the school to present the lesson, and share any results by posting them on a bulletin board or website.

Quick Quiz Answer

a) Solidarity expresses the interdependence of the human family, God's family; it requires just policies locally, nationally, and internationally.

For the rest of the quiz, visit www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship.





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 make copies of this for each student 

Meet the challenges of citizenship in your school

“As an institution, we are called to be political but not partisan.” The Church cannot champion any one political party or candidate.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO

- Look beyond your preferences and opinions.
- Study all sides of each issue.

“The Church is called to be principled but not ideological.” Even though we cannot compromise our basic values or teachings, we can be open to different ways of promoting or advancing them.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO

- Seek alternative means of being heard.
- Work out solutions to conflict.

“We are called to be clear but also civil.” We are grounded in principles of charity and justice.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF TO

- State your ideas without calling names or making derisive comments.
- Speak civilly, especially when you disagree with someone.

Above quotes taken from Faithful Citizenship, p. 29

To Teach is changing!

After the Summer 2005 issue, *To Teach* will change formats. It will only be available as a PDF file that can be sent directly to your e-mail address or downloaded from the USCCB Publishing website (www.usccb.org/publishing).

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