

Introductory Note to

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

“Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus’ parable summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals.”

--Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no. 66.

As Catholics and Americans, we are blessed to be able to participate in our nation’s political and public life. Our freedoms respect the dignity of individuals and their consciences and allow us to come together for the common good. Election seasons, therefore, should contain a sense of gratitude and hope. Our love for this country, our patriotism, properly impels us to vote.

But increasingly, it seems, election seasons are a time of anxiety and spiritual trial. Political rhetoric is increasingly angry, seeking to motivate primarily through division and hatred. Fear can be an effective tool for raising money. The most heated arguments online often get the most clicks. Demonizing the other can win votes.

We propose once more the moral framework of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* precisely as pastors, inspired by the Good Samaritan, with the hope of binding these wounds and healing these bitter divisions. This document is not based on personalities or partisanship, the latest news cycle, or what’s trending on social media. Instead, it reflects the perennial role of the Church in public life in proclaiming timeless principles: the infinite worth and dignity of every human life, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Not sure what these mean? We invite you to read a copy of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and learn more.

Allowing your conscience to be stretched and formed by these reflections can give you peace! They point to Jesus’ challenge to show mercy to those in need, just as the Good Samaritan. As Pope Francis writes, “Here, all our distinctions, labels and masks fall away: it is the moment of truth. Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of others?” (*Fratelli tutti*, no. 70.) Let this be in our hearts when we talk about politics and make political choices.

Some might be tempted to say: yes, of course, we will be the ones who help by promoting good and opposing evil. But when confronted with so much good at risk and so much evil, it is a great challenge to avoid fear and anger. The threat of abortion remains our pre-eminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless brothers and sisters and destroys more than a million lives per year in our country alone. Other grave threats to the life and dignity of the

36 human person include euthanasia, gun violence, terrorism, the death penalty, and human
37 trafficking. There is also the redefinition of marriage and gender, threats to religious freedom at
38 home and abroad, lack of justice for the poor, the suffering of migrants and refugees, wars and
39 famines around the world, racism, the need for greater access to healthcare and education, care for
40 our common home, and more. All threaten the dignity of the human person.

41 So *precisely how* we promote good and oppose evil is an essential part of answering the
42 Lord’s call, of being a disciple. As St. Paul reminds us:

43 Never let evil talk pass your lips; say only the good things men need to hear, things that
44 will really help them. Do nothing that will sadden the Holy Spirit with whom you were
45 sealed against the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh
46 words, slander, and malice of every kind. In place of these, be kind to one another,
47 compassionate, and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ (Eph. 4:29-
48 32).

49 Thus, Pope Francis exhorts us to “genuine dialogue and openness to others,” by which we may
50 “be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and
51 above all, to work and struggle together” (*Fratelli tutti*, no. 203). This applies to the faithful both
52 as voters and as candidates—we must consider not only candidates’ positions on these issues, but
53 their character and integrity as well.

54 How can we meet this challenge? Again, St. Paul gives us a way: Put on “the mind of
55 Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). Take time away from social media and spend time with Holy Scripture and
56 the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off the TV and the podcast, and listen in silence. Volunteer at a soup
57 kitchen, a homeless shelter, a crisis pregnancy center. Serve the poor, the needy, the outcast. Pray
58 often, letting faith inform your political participation.

59 Participation in political life also requires judgments about concrete circumstances.
60 While the bishops help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not tell the
61 laity to vote for particular candidates. On these often complex matters, it is the laity’s
62 responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many
63 and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ. Conscience is “a judgment of reason” by
64 which one determines whether an action is right or wrong (See *Catechism of the Catholic*
65 *Church*, no. 1778). It does not allow us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere
66 “feeling.” Conscience—properly formed according to God’s revelation and the teaching of the
67 Church—is a means by which one listens to God and discerns how to act in accordance with the
68 truth. (1) The truth is something we receive, not something we make. We can only judge using
69 the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things true.

70 It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in
71 Church life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do
72 our best to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions.

73 We must also seek wisdom, as Holy Scripture instructs:

74 Wisdom from above is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in
75 sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere. The harvest of
76 justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace (Jas. 3:17-18).

77 The teachings of the Church, moreover, offer a vision of hope, where justice and mercy abound,
78 because God is the infinite source of all goodness and love. With this wisdom and hope, we can
79 find a way to bend down as the Good Samaritan did, through the fear and divisions, to touch and
80 heal the wounds.

81 May God bless you as you consider and pray over these challenging decisions. May God
82 bless our nation with true wisdom, peace, and mutual forgiveness, that we may decide together,
83 through our democratic processes, to uphold the dignity of life and the common good.

84

85 (1) *Gaudium et spes* (*The Church in the Modern World*), no. 16. See also, *Catechism of the*
86 *Catholic Church*, no. 1785.

87 **Bulletin Insert 2 of 6 – Church Role in Public Life**

88 Design elements on all bulletin inserts:

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94

95 The Church is the body of Christ, who reigns as king over all Creation. Everything, including
96 political life, belongs to Jesus Christ, and so participation in political life belongs to the mission
97 of the Church. “Our mandate is to ‘go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the
98 whole creation’ (Mk 16:15). . . . Here, ‘the creation’ refers to every aspect of human life. . . .
99 ‘Nothing human can be alien to it’” (*Evangeliium gaudium*, no. 181, quoting *Aparecida Document*,
100 no. 380).

101 **The Role of the Church in American Political Life**

102 Our national tradition of religious freedom permits and encourages all people of faith to bring the
103 insights of their religious traditions to bear on political matters. As Pope Francis affirmed during
104 his visit to the U.S., “[R]eligious liberty, by its nature, transcends places of worship and the
105 private sphere of individuals and families. . . . [R]eligion itself, the religious dimension, is not a
106 subculture; it is part of the culture of every people and every nation.” (1)

107 “If society is to have a future, it must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to that
108 truth. . . . A society is noble and decent not least for its support of the pursuit of truth and its
109 adherence to the most basic of truths” (*Fratelli tutti*, no. 207). The truths that guide public life
110 can be known by natural reason. The sanctity of human life, the equal dignity of all individuals,
111 the obligation to protect the vulnerable, the nature and purposes of sex, marriage, and family—
112 these are not exclusively “religious” truths, but truths that all people of goodwill can come to
113 know without the aid of revelation. Our Catholic faith sheds light on these truths, and so we
114 have a duty to bring that light to our nation.

115 **Many Parts, All One Body**

116 The bishops and their pastoral collaborators each have distinct roles in the Church’s mission.
117 The bishops have the responsibility to govern the society of the Church, hand on doctrine and
118 tradition, and administer the sacraments. The laity are called to bring the gospel to bear on the
119 world. While many laity are involved in roles of leadership and service within the Church, it
120 remains primarily the role of the laity to advocate for justice, to serve in public office, and to
121 inform daily life with the gospel. “The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper
122 to the lay faithful” (*Deus caritas est*, no. 29).

123 Participation in political life requires judgments about concrete circumstances. While bishops
124 together with their coworkers help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not
125 tell the laity to vote for particular candidates. On these often complex matters, it is the laity’s

126 responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many
127 and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ.

128 **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship**

129 Conscience is “a judgment of reason” by which one determines whether an action is right or
130 wrong (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778). It does not allow us to justify doing
131 whatever we want, nor is it a mere “feeling.” Conscience—properly formed according to God’s
132 revelation and the teaching of the Church—is a means by which one listens to God and discerns
133 how to act in accordance with the truth. (2) The truth is something we receive, not something we
134 make. We can only judge using the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things
135 true.

136 It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in Church
137 life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do our
138 best to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions. These decisions should
139 take into account a candidate’s commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given
140 issue. Thus equipped, and further impelled by our sense of patriotism, we exercise our right and
141 duty to vote and otherwise to participate actively in public life. (3) By forming our consciences
142 for faithful citizenship, we can better pursue the common good and thus obey the command of
143 our Lord to love our neighbors.

144

145 Footnotes:

146 (1) Pope Francis, Meeting for Religious Liberty with Hispanic Community and Other
147 Immigrants, September 26, 2015.

148 (2) [*Gaudium et spes*](#) (*The Church in the Modern World*), no. 16. See also, [*Catechism of the*](#)
149 [*Catholic Church*](#), no. 1785.

150 (3) [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), nos. 2239-40.

151 **Bulletin Insert 3 of 6 – Dignity of the Human Person**

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159 **Side 1:**

160

161 In their statement on [*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#), the Catholic bishops of the
162 United States identify the four main principles of the Church’s social teaching and apply them to
163 some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but
164 instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this
165 often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the
166 Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all interrelated. This bulletin focuses on
167 the **Dignity of the Human Person**, and the other three principles are covered in three other
168 bulletins in this series.

169

170 Because each human person is created in the image and likeness of God, each one of us
171 possesses innate and inviolable human dignity. This dignity is present in each person from the
172 moment of their conception and throughout their lives. As Pope Francis has emphasized, human
173 dignity is central to building a society in which we are “brothers and sisters all” (1):

174

175 “Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this
176 fundamental right cannot be denied by any country. People have this right even if they
177 are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations. This does not detract from
178 their great dignity as human persons, a dignity based not on circumstances but on the
179 intrinsic worth of their being. Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future
180 either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity.” (2)

181

182 The dignity of the human person is the foundation for a moral vision of society. As we seek to
183 imitate the Good Samaritan and become neighbor to all, we must work to protect the dignity of
184 all, especially those who are most vulnerable.

185

186 Footnotes:

187 (1) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#) (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*), no. 8.

188 (2) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 107. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, [*Caritas in veritate*](#)
189 (*Charity in Truth*), no. 45.

190

191

192

193 **Side 2:**

194

195 As we engage in the public square with a well-formed conscience:

196

197 We work to protect the most vulnerable—children in the womb who are in danger of abortion—
198 while also standing in radical solidarity with mothers. (3) Building on their bond of flesh and
199 kinship, and on the network of family, neighbor, and community relationships in which they are
200 situated, the Church actively assists mothers and their children to have a brighter future.

201

202 We continue to protect the dignity of our sister or brother who is elderly, disabled, or ill by
203 strongly rejecting euthanasia and assisted suicide. These practices are symptoms of a
204 “throwaway culture,” in which children of God of inestimable worth are cast aside as worthless.
205 (4)

206

207 Likewise, we must recognize the inherent dignity of the migrant and refugee. In our country
208 now, that means comprehensive immigration reform that offers a path to citizenship, treats
209 immigrant workers fairly, prevents the separation of families, maintains the integrity of our
210 borders, respects the rule of law, and addresses the factors that compel people to leave their own
211 countries.

212

213 We support the dignity of the person, created male or female; therefore, we oppose a gender
214 ideology that fails to recognize the difference and reciprocity between man and woman. (5)

215

216 Racism attacks the dignity of the human person by denying that we are all equally made in the
217 image of God, so we must overcome racism in our hearts as well as in our systems and
218 institutions. (6)

219

220 We continue to seek reform of the criminal justice system and to end the use of the death
221 penalty. We support common sense measures to reduce gun violence. (7)

222

223 Finally, we seek to prevent and remedy any aspects of an “economy of exclusion,” (8) which
224 “does not hesitate to exploit, discard, and even kill human beings” (9), and to work instead
225 toward an “economy of communion” rooted in ethical concern. (10)

226

227 “Social friendship and universal fraternity” Pope Francis writes, “necessarily call for an
228 acknowledgement of *the worth of every human person*, always and everywhere.” (11) Through
229 our political participation, our accompaniment of those in need, and the witness of our daily
230 lives, may we support the worth of every person, created in God’s image.

231

232 Footnotes:

233 (3) [USCCB, “Letter and Policy Recommendations Supporting Women and Children,” October](#)
234 [26, 2022.](#)

235 (4) St. John Paul II, [Evangelium vitae](#) (*The Gospel of Life*), nos. 8, 15, 18, 23, 94. See also: Pope
236 Francis, [Fratelli tutti](#) nos. 18-21.

237 (5) Pope Francis, [Amoris laetitia](#) (*The Joy of Love*), no. 56.

- 238 (6) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [*Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to*](#)
239 [*Love*](#), 3-8.
- 240 (7) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), nos. 263-270. See also: [*Forming Consciences for Faithful*](#)
241 [*Citizenship*](#), no. 84.
- 242 (8) Pope Francis, [*Evangelii gaudium*](#) (*Joy of the Gospel*), no. 53.
- 243 (9) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 22.
- 244 (10) Pope Benedict XVI, [*Caritas in veritate*](#), nos. 45-47.
- 245 (11) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 107.

246 **Bulletin Insert 4 of 6 – Common Good**

247 Design elements on all bulletin inserts:

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256 United States identify the four main principles of the Church’s social teaching and apply them to
257 some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but
258 instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this
259 often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the
260 Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all interrelated. This bulletin focuses on
261 the **Common Good**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this
262 series.

263

264 The Common Good is “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or
265 as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily.” (1) Human dignity is
266 respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic
267 responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, a right to religious freedom, and a
268 right to have access to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights
269 are duties and responsibilities—to ourselves, to our families, to the larger society, and to the
270 earth. (2) In short, we should seek “to build that kind of society where it is easier for people to
271 be good.” (3)

272 In the midst of a “throwaway world” in which some members of the human family “can be
273 readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence,” Pope Francis
274 urges us to build a “culture of encounter” in which those most in need receive our greatest
275 concern and attention. We must “place at the center of all political, social and economic activity
276 the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good.” (4)

277

278 Footnotes:

279 (1) [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#), no. 1906, citing [*Gaudium et spes*](#) (*The Church in the*
280 *Modern World*), no. 26.

281 (2) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#),
282 nos. 49, 51.

283 (3) Peter Maurin, as quoted by Dorothy Day. See *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of*
284 *Dorothy Day*, (New York: Random House, 2010), 457.

285 (4) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#) (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*), nos. 18 and 232.

286

287 **Side 2:**

288 As we seek to imitate the Good Samaritan, who was neighbor to all, we pursue the Common
289 Good in order that every individual and all people can flourish. (5)

290 Marriage and the family are the central institutions of social life – the primary school of virtue,
291 where we first experience common rather than merely individual goods – and so these
292 institutions should be supported and strengthened.

293 Likewise, as one human family dwelling in our common home, we must hear “both the cry of the
294 earth and the cry of the poor” and respond to climate change with actions to better protect
295 creation for our brothers and sisters now and in generations to come. (6)

296 Accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father, and as our common home includes
297 accepting our bodies as God’s gift, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own
298 bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. (7)

299 We recognize and protect the right to religious liberty, our first and most cherished freedom. The
300 protection of conscience and religious liberty is an indispensable element of the common good –
301 a fundamental human right that knows no geographical boundaries. (8)

302 While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve
303 special concern, which the Church describes as the *preferential option for the poor*. (9) Laws
304 and policies must prioritize those who struggle to make ends meet and must preserve the social
305 safety net and promote decent jobs, affordable housing, and childcare.

306 Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Caritas in veritate (Charity in Truth)*: “To desire the *common*
307 *good* and strive towards it *is a requirement of justice and charity*.” We must be attentive to the
308 common good “juridically, civilly, politically and culturally” in the life of society. “The more we
309 strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors,” he writes,
310 “the more effectively we love them.” (10)

311 Footnotes:

312 (5) Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, no. 66.

313 (6) Pope Francis, *Laudato si’ (On Care for Our Common Home)*, no. 49. See also: Pope Benedict
314 XVI, *Caritas in veritate (Charity in Truth)*, nos. 48-52, and Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, nos. 58
315 and 60.

316 (7) Pope Francis, *Laudato si’ (On Care for Our Common Home)*, no. 155.

317 (8) St. Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)*, no. 6; *Catechism*
318 *of the Catholic Church*, no. 1907, citing *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*,
319 no. 26.

320 (9) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*,
321 no 53.

322 (10) Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, no. 7.

323

324 **Bulletin Insert 5 of 6 – Solidarity**

325 Design elements on all bulletin inserts:

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332 **Side 1:**

333

334 In their statement on [*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#), the Catholic bishops of the
335 United States identify the four main principles of the Church’s social teaching and apply them to
336 some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but
337 instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this
338 often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the
339 Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all interrelated. This bulletin focuses on
340 **Solidarity**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this series.

341

342 Solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and
343 of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.” (1) We are one human family,
344 whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. The person is social
345 in nature; we develop and flourish within a community. As baptized members of the community
346 of the Church, we are part of one body in Christ and we are also part of one global human
347 family. (2)

348 In [*Fratelli tutti*](#) (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*) Pope Francis places solidarity at the center
349 of what it means to cultivate social friendship as one family:

350 “Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means
351 thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the
352 appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combatting the structural causes of
353 poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land, and housing, the denial of social and labor
354 rights.” (3)

355 Thus, solidarity affects not only the goals we pursue in public life, but also the way we pursue
356 them—ever mindful that we are all brothers and sisters, all children of God.

357 Footnotes:

358 (1) [*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*](#), no. 193, quoting St. John Paul II,
359 [*Sollicitudo rei socialis*](#) (*On Social Concerns*), no. 38. (See Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mk 10:42-45;
360 Lk 22:25-27).

361 (2) Benedict XVI, [*Deus caritas est*](#) (*God is Love*), no. 25b. See also: USCCB, [*Forming*](#)
362 [*Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#), nos. 52-54.

363 (3) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#) (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*), no. 116, quoting [*Address*](#)
364 [*to Participants in the Meeting of Popular Movements*](#) (October 28, 2014).

365

366 **Side 2:**

367 Solidarity requires that in our prayer and in our political engagement, those who are weak,
368 vulnerable, and most in need receive preferential concern.

369 In imitation of the Good Samaritan, we seek to be neighbor to all. (4) We are called to practice
370 "radical solidarity" by accompanying pregnant women to choose life and by offering support to
371 new mothers and their children. (5) As neighbors to all, we also advocate for families affected by
372 poverty, unemployment, or illness, individuals struggling with mental illness or addiction, the
373 elderly and those with disabilities, and all whose livelihoods and homes are endangered by
374 climate change. (6)

375 In countries ravaged by war, such as Ukraine, West Africa, and the Middle East, we must "touch
376 the wounded flesh of the victims" and support efforts for relief and peace, (7) while also working
377 collaboratively to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons. (8)

378 We seek policies that "welcome, protect, promote and integrate" migrants and refugees who
379 arrive at our borders, and which aid development in countries of origin. (9)

380 Racism is an obstacle to solidarity, and we strive to root it out not only by examining our hearts
381 individually, but also by looking critically at our policies and institutions. (10)

382 In a culture that overemphasizes the accumulation of wealth, we must not forget our "obligation
383 to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her
384 integral development." (11)

385 As we seek to foster solidarity in hearts and policies, let us pray with Pope Francis in *Fratelli*
386 *tutti*: "Lord, Father of our human family . . . Move us to create healthier societies and a more
387 dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war." Amen. (12)

388 Footnotes:

389 (4) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no.80.

390 (5) USCCB Chairmen, "[Letter and Policy Recommendations Supporting Women and Children](#),"
391 October 26, 2022.

392 (6) Pope Francis, [*Laudato si'*](#) (*On Care for Our Common Home*), nos. 25, 48-49. See also: Pope
393 Benedict XVI, [*Caritas in Veritate*](#) (*Charity in Truth*), nos. 48-52, and Pope Francis, [*Laudate*](#)
394 [*Deum*](#), no. 31.

395 (7) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 261.

396 (8) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 262. See also: St. John Paul II, [*Sollicitudo rei socialis*](#), nos.
397 23-24.

398 (9) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), nos. 129 and 132. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, [*Caritas in*](#)
399 [*veritate*](#), no. 62.

400 (10) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, [*Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call*](#)
401 [*to Love*](#), a Pastoral Letter Against Racism, 2018. See also: [*Fratelli tutti*](#), nos. 20, 41, and 97.

402 (11) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 118.

403 (12) Pope Francis, [*Fratelli tutti*](#), no. 287.

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405

406 **Bulletin Insert 6 of 6 – Subsidiarity**

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416 United States identify the four main principles of the Church’s social teaching and apply them to
417 some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but
418 instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this
419 often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the
420 Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all interrelated. This bulletin focuses on
421 **Subsidiarity**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this series.

422

423 The principle of Subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society (such as the state or
424 federal government) should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions (such as
425 the family, local schools, or the Church community). Yet larger institutions have essential
426 responsibilities when local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human
427 needs, or advance the common good. (1) Subsidiarity reflects the essential freedom and innate
428 human dignity of each person while also recognizing the role higher authorities, such as
429 government, can play to ensure that all people are able to thrive.

430 Respecting this principle promotes the flourishing of each individual person and the realization
431 of the common good. As Pope Francis has explained, the principle of Subsidiarity “allows
432 everyone to assume his or her own role in the healing and destiny of society.” (2) By
433 participating in public life locally, each person and the voluntary associations of civil society to
434 which they belong can be “leaven,” bringing “enrichment” to neighbors, to communities, and to
435 society as a whole. (3)

436 Footnotes:

437 (1) USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, nos. 47-48. See also: *Centesimus*
438 *annus* (*The Hundredth Year*), no. 48; *Dignitatis humanae* (*Declaration on Religious Freedom*),
439 nos. 4-6, and *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 185.

440 (2) Pope Francis, General Audience, “*Catechesis ‘Healing the World’: 8. Subsidiarity and the*
441 *Virtue of Hope*,” Sept. 23, 2020. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate* (*Charity in*
442 *Truth*), no. 57.

443 (3) Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (*On Fraternity and Social Friendship*), no. 142.

444

445 **Side 2:**

446 As we assist the faithful to take up the call to be “leaven” in society, we seek policies that allow
447 individuals and communities to flourish.

448 As the bishops teach in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, "Family—based on
449 marriage between a man and a woman—is the first and most fundamental unit of society: a
450 sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. It should be defended and strengthened, not
451 redefined, undermined, or further distorted." (4)

452 It is important to uphold parents’ rights and responsibilities to care for their children, including
453 the right to direct their children’s education in accordance with their convictions, with support
454 rather than interference from the state. (5) These include the rights of parents to send their child
455 to the school of their choice, and to protect their child from “gender ideology” at school.

456 Moreover, laws, programs, and initiatives should strengthen the social safety net and improve
457 family stability. For example, parents should receive support through work, training, assistance
458 with childcare, healthcare, housing and transportation. (6) The Earned Income Tax Credit and
459 child tax credits continue to be important vehicles to help low-income families out of poverty.

460 The Church’s special concern for the poor requires the pursuit of social and economic policies
461 which foster jobs with decent working conditions and just wages, and which support the right of
462 workers, including the ability to organize and bargain collectively without reprisal. (7)

463 As we pursue the principle of Subsidiarity in our public policies, we pray for all families and for
464 those in poverty, and we support their efforts to exercise their rights and responsibilities in
465 society.

466 Footnotes:

467 (4) USCCB, [*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*](#), no. 46.

468 (5) Pope Francis, [*Amoris laetitia*](#) (*The Joy of Love*), no. 84.

469 (6) See Pope Francis, [*Amoris laetitia*](#), nos. 25, 44, on the need for family support through
470 dignified employment, education, healthcare and housing

471 (7) St. John Paul II, [*Centesimus annus*](#), nos. 7-8, 35. See also: [*Compendium of the Social*](#)
472 [*Doctrine of the Church*](#), nos. 301-309.

473 VIDEO SCRIPT “FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP”

474

475 [OPENING GRAPHIC WITH MUSIC]

476 What does it mean to be a Faithful Citizen?

477

478 [GRAPHIC: QUOTE FROM POPE FRANCIS]

479 “Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus’ parable summons us to rediscover our
480 vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social
481 bond.”

482 —Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, no 66

483

484 [BISHOP SPEAKS ON CAMERA]

485 [LOWER THIRD GRAPHIC: What Does It Mean to Be a Faithful Citizen?]

486 “As Americans, the virtue of patriotism calls us to vote. Elections should contain a sense of
487 gratitude and hope. Increasingly, it seems they are a time of anxiety, division, and spiritual trial.
488 Inspired by the Good Samaritan, please join in helping bind these wounds and heal these bitter
489 divisions.”

490

491 [VOICE ONE SPEAKS ON CAMERA]

492 [LOWER THIRD GRAPHIC: For More Information, Visit FaithfulCitizenship.org.]

493 “Not sure how? Visit FaithfulCitizenship.org for a reflection on our role as Catholics in public
494 life and our vocation as citizens. Allow yourself to follow Christ’s way of inviting mercy for our
495 brothers and sisters in need.”

496

497 [VOICE TWO SPEAKS ON CAMERA]

498 [LOWER THIRD GRAPHIC: What Does It Mean to Be a Faithful Citizen?]

499 “Our primary responsibility is to protect the most vulnerable, especially mothers and their babies
500 in the womb. There are so many other challenges as well: euthanasia, gun violence and the death
501 penalty, the weakening of marriage and gender, the threats to religious freedom at home and
502 abroad, justice for the poor, the suffering of migrants and refugees, wars and famines around the
503 world, racism, access to healthcare, education, care for the environment, and more.”

504

505 [VOICE THREE SPEAKS ON CAMERA]

506 [LOWER THIRD GRAPHIC: For More Information, Visit FaithfulCitizenship.org.]

507 “How can we be faithful citizens? Think with the mind of Christ, as St. Paul tells us. Take time
508 away from social media and spend time with Holy Scripture and the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off
509 the TV and the podcast and listen in silence. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, a homeless shelter, a
510 crisis pregnancy center. Serve the poor, the needy, the outcast. Pray often.”

511

512 [BISHOP SPEAKS ON CAMERA]

513 [LOWER THIRD GRAPHIC: What Does It Mean to Be a Faithful Citizen?]

514 “As St. Paul reminds us, get rid of all bitterness, all passion, and anger. Then, we will be ready to
515 live and vote as faithful citizens. May God bless you with wisdom, peace, and mercy.”

516

517 [CLOSING GRAPHIC WITH MUSIC]

518 For more information visit FaithfulCitizenship.org