

# *The Catholic Bishops' Call to Faithful Citizenship:*

*Highlights (Bulletin I of 4)*

*By Gilberto M. Hinojosa*

FORMING CONSCIENCES FOR FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP: A CALL TO POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY FROM THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF THE UNITED STATES can be found in its entirety along with other documents and readings by going to

<http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org/>

## Introduction: Be informed in the light of faith and reason

The Catholic Bishops of the United States have issued a remarkable declaration, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," calling Americans to consider the moral implications of public issues. This is a very relevant document for all time but particularly in an election season.

The Church has a "rich heritage" on social justice, the document reminds us, adding that pursuing justice and peace is part of being faithful to God and carrying out God's will.

But bringing about justice and peace is not something that happens automatically from our relationship with God; rather, it involves forming our hearts and educating our minds in order "to evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates' promises and actions in light of the Gospel." Accordingly, simply casting one's vote is not sufficient; believers have the obligation of becoming informed.

"We bishops," the document clarifies, "do not intend to tell Catholics for whom or against whom to vote. Our purpose is to help...[the faithful] form their consciences in accordance with God's truth."



Shaping a just and peaceful society "is a basic part of the mission we have received from Jesus Christ...Christ, the Word made flesh, in showing us the Father's love, also shows us what it truly means to be human...Christ's love for us [that] lets us see our human dignity in full clarity and compels us to love our neighbors as he has loved us."

Faith and reason — and American values — go hand in hand when we explore the nature of human dignity: "Christ, the Teacher, shows us what is true and good, that is, what is in accord with our human nature as free, intelligent beings created in God's image and likeness and endowed by the Creator with dignity and rights."

**"Charity must animate the entire lives of the...faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as *social charity*"**

- Pope Benedict XVI

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