



IOWA CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Iowa

# FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP FOR IOWA CATHOLICS

**A**s Catholics, our cause is the defense of human life and dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable.

The defense of human life and dignity must begin with the fundamental right to life from natural conception to natural death. From there it extends to fair access to productive work and fair wages, food and shelter, education and health care, protection from harm and freedom to emigrate. All people have a right to these, and therefore we have a duty to help protect life and to provide for the common good. Most especially, we have a duty to safeguard the family as the basic unit of society, and to support mediating institutions such as churches and other professional and charitable organizations that help society cope with its biggest challenges.

These commitments are a natural development of the words we hear in Scripture. We are to love our neighbor as Christ has loved us (John 13:34). We're supposed to bring "good news to the poor, liberty to captives, sight to the blind, and to set the downtrodden free," as Jesus says in Luke, quoting from the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4:18; Isaiah 61:1-2; 58:6). We look to Exodus, chapter 20, which tells us, "You shall not kill." This is God directly speaking to us through the prophets.

As faithful Catholics, we must consider every issue and candidate through the lens of God's Word. Party and candidate talking points are often mere sound bites designed to excite the "base" and drive people to one side of an issue. Instead, the principles of Catholic social teaching – dignity of the human person, subsidiarity and solidarity, freedom, participation, the common good, and care for the poor and most vulnerable among us – must define our positions on issues and should invite reflection on the best specific response. Please review [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org) for more information on these principles.

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the common good does not  
end with voting."*

Civic engagement is a moral obligation and we have a duty to vote if we are able. We also have a duty to inform ourselves about issues and vote conscientiously. We may decide to write in a candidates' name, or even choose not to vote for any candidate for a particular office. Our choice of how to vote in every instance must follow our best understanding of what is the good for all, following a time of reflection and prayer. Everyone guides his or her choices by something. That something should be the teaching of Christ and his Church.

Our commitment to the common good does not end with voting. It can take many forms. We can start solving problems at the local level by organizing with others in charitable work to help meet the basic needs of individuals. Another way is to work together on legislation that addresses the structural dimension of problems and their respective solutions.

What an important time it is to be a Catholic influencing politics and government! Considering the lack of civility in our political system, the voice of informed Catholics is needed more than ever. The message of our Catholic teaching is one of hope, grounded in faith and reason. Making decisions in the light of our faith will not be easy, and it may lead us to a place we don't want to go. But it is our life-long obligation to say "yes" to God in all things, and listen for His voice sounding in our heart.

## WHAT SHOULD WE BE LOOKING FOR IN LEADERS?

“Those with political responsibilities must not forget or underestimate the moral dimension of political representation, which consists in the commitment to share fully in the destiny of the people and to seek solutions to social problems. In this perspective, responsible authority also means authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to put power into practice as service (patience, modesty, moderation, charity, efforts to share), an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work.”

*(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, No. 410).*

## HOW DO CATHOLICS FORM THEIR CONSCIENCE?

As the U.S. bishops note in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, we need to form our consciences in an ongoing manner. How do we do this?

- 1) When examining any issue or situation, we must begin by being open to the truth and what is right.
- 2) We must study Sacred Scripture and the teaching of the Church.
- 3) We must examine the facts and background information about various choices.
- 4) We must prayerfully reflect to discern the will of God (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, no. 18*).

## WHAT SHOULD IOWA CATHOLICS ASK CANDIDATES?

A list of candidates is available through the Iowa Catholic Conference. An affirmative answer to the following questions would be consistent with the positions of the Conference:

### Do you support:

- Protecting human life from conception until natural death as a foundational principle?
- Maintaining Iowa’s ban on doctor-prescribed suicide?
- Financial assistance for parents who wish to send their children to a nonpublic school?
- Assisting poor and vulnerable people by adequately funding programs that address hunger and joblessness, and help people rise above poverty?
- Rejecting initiatives to compromise the First Amendment and its guarantee of religious freedom?
- Legislation that helps immigrants provide for their families and become participating members of their communities?
- Maintaining Iowa’s status as a “no death penalty” state?
- Just wages and labor practices by employers?
- Measures to protect and improve the quality of the air, water, and land in Iowa?

## VOTING

Voting begins in late September in Iowa. For more information visit [sos.iowa.gov](http://sos.iowa.gov).

## JOIN THE IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

You can keep updated on issues in Iowa by receiving regular newsletters and action alerts from the Iowa Catholic Conference.

“Join the Network” at [www.iowacatholicconference.org](http://www.iowacatholicconference.org) or at [www.facebook.com/iowacatholicconference](https://www.facebook.com/iowacatholicconference).

Follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/iacatholicconf](https://www.twitter.com/iacatholicconf).

Most Rev. Michael Jackels, Archbishop of Dubuque  
Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless, Bishop of Sioux City



Most Rev. Martin Amos, Bishop of Davenport  
Most Rev. Richard Pates, Bishop of Des Moines

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530 42nd St., Des Moines, IA 50312 • 515.243.6256

[www.iowacatholicconference.org](http://www.iowacatholicconference.org) • [info@iowacatholicconference.org](mailto:info@iowacatholicconference.org)