

AUTHENTIC MORAL CITIZENSHIP

This guide is totally non-partisan. Neither this document nor the CCC endorses any particular political party or candidate for any elected office. The CCC intends this to be a tool to help voters make an intelligent and prudent decision and to bring their well-formed conscience into the voting booth on Election Day. Responsible citizenship is an obligation of justice. Those who live in democratic republics have a moral duty to vote and participate in the political process for the common good. A Catholic should endeavor to affiliate with political parties that coincide with one's moral conscience and ensure that their policies and platforms do not endorse anything evil. Here are non-negotiable values & principles to be a responsible citizen. **NOT ALL ISSUES ARE OF EQUAL VALUE & IMPORTANCE.** The **Right to Life is the preeminent, primary, and principal value above all others, since without life, there are no other human rights.** A voter should use their prudence guided by a well informed and well-formed conscience and keep in mind the **priority of the sanctity of human life**, especially the innocent. The other non-negotiables would come next followed by secondary and tertiary moral principles in determining a viable candidate to cast one's ballot. Citizens are morally obliged to make prudential judgments based on a properly and well-formed conscience that coincides with the teachings of the Magisterium and the Gospel.

CLICK ON EACH NON-NEGOTIABLE AND ASK YOURSELF IF THE CANDIDATE UPHOLDS & SUPPORTS THIS PRINCIPLE AND TO WHAT DEGREE IN COMPARISON TO HIS/HER OPPONENT.
These criteria are based on the 2020 USCCB letter "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship"

RIGHT & SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE – **This is the first and foremost fundamental right of every human being that comes directly from our human nature made by God.** All other inalienable rights, privileges, liberties, and freedoms come from this. Injustices such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, genocide and terrorism deliberately kill innocent human beings. *Similarly, direct threats to the sanctity & dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. These must always be opposed. Laws that legitimize any of these practices are profoundly unjust and immoral. The USCCB calls for greater assistance for those who are sick and dying, through adequate medical care, and for effective and compassionate palliative and hospice care. Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia as these directly kill innocent human lives. Therefore, one must rate this as the highest factor.* The future appointments of Pro-Life Justices on the Supreme Court are an important factor when choosing presidential and senatorial candidates or gubernatorial elections for state government.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate support the use of public tax funding for abortions and birth control? What is their position on partial-birth abortion? Does he/she support abortion on demand or with restrictions? Does the candidate support a right to life amendment for the unborn? Does he/she support fetal stem cell research, human cloning? Does the candidate support the abolishment of abortion? In all cases? In most? In some? In none? Comparing all candidates for the same public office, who is the more/most pro-life and who is the less/least?

FREEDOM OF RELIGION (RELIGIOUS LIBERTY) – separation of church and state does not mean elimination of either. Freedom of Religion (not *from* religion) includes but is not limited to Freedom of Worship. Faith communities (houses of worship, schools, hospitals or businesses), have the right to follow their moral principles. It is gross injustice to compel anyone to violate their conscience by mandating the supplying or financing of materials or activities deemed morally offensive (such as contraceptives and abortion). Church leaders have the right to preach, teach and publicly express their faith in accord with their sacred beliefs unfettered by government or civil authority. Citizens and their respective churches should be allowed to worship and publicly express their religion and only under the gravest reasons should they be required to stop religious

services in public and only while the danger exists. Prohibiting public worship while shopping, entertainment, dining, recreational activities are permitted is an abuse and should be opposed.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate intend to deny citizens their right to practice their faith by imposing upon them mandatory providing of contraceptives, abortions, and sterilizations? Does the candidate support legislation that would compel people of faith to violate their religious conscience?

SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE & FAMILY LIFE – the family is the fundamental building block of society. Both church and state, religion and government, depend on families for stability and to provide the common good. **Marriage by nature and definition is the union of one man and one woman in a permanent, faithful and potentially fruitful relationship.** The family thrives when children are raised by their mothers and fathers living together in the same home as husband and wife. Neither the church nor the government has the authority to redefine marriage to allow same sex, polygamous or adulterous unions as equal alternatives. Likewise, transgender, non-binary, and other sex identity ideologies should not be imposed upon society nor should children be victims of gender modification or manipulation. *As Pope Francis has taught: “the removal of [sexual] difference creates a problem, not a solution” and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: “Thus the Church reaffirms . . . her no to ‘gender’ philosophies, because the reciprocity between male and female is an expression of the beauty of nature willed by the Creator”*

Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private, and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination. The State should respect the rights of parents to send their children to parochial schools or to homeschool them while at the same time providing ethical and sufficient public education for those children whose parents decide to send them there instead. Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should uphold the God-given meaning and value of marriage and family, help families stay together, and reward responsibility and sacrifice for children.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate support the recognition and acceptance of non-traditional marriages? Does the candidate support public funding of tax dollars for sex/gender changes? Does the candidate respect the right of parents as primary teachers of their children and their right to send to Catholic or private schools or to homeschool their own children?

RIGHT OF PRIVATE PROPERTY – every person has the right to own private property; hence theft and vandalism are both criminal and sinful acts. Seizing property (possessions, land or money) without due process, fair compensation and serious reason is a great injustice. Forced redistribution by the government (socialism or communism) is not in conformity with the Gospel, either. *Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to freely choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal. It also affirms economic freedom, initiative, and the right to private property.* Unsustainable debt nationally or individually also threatens private ownership and the common good, whether now or in the near future. Unbridled consumerism (not capitalism) and avaricious materialism are equally contrary to the Gospel. Generosity in charity is not only a virtue but a moral duty to those who are blessed with more earthly treasures, but it should be voluntarily done and not compelled by civil law.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate support the involuntary seizure and redistribution of private property and wealth? Does the candidate advocate unreasonable or unequitable taxing of citizens? Does he/she seek to protect the right of private ownership and a free market while defending the right of workers to form guilds and unions? Do they support the fair negotiations between labor and management?

RIGHT OF ACCESS TO NECESSARY GOODS – due to the fundamental right to life, persons also have the right of access to those goods necessary for the preservation of life (food, clothes, shelter, education, work and medical care). Access means being able to acquire either by purchasing or being in the employ of another in exchange for these essentials. Unjust wages and depriving an employer of fair work are both injustices. Economic laws and policies must allow for the reasonable access of citizens to what they need by giving them the realistic opportunities to acquire them. We are obliged to help the poor but support means enabling them not making them dependent upon the state. Likewise, predatory lenders and abusive debt collectors exploit the poor and continue their economic bondage. Moral governing demands respecting both solidarity & subsidiarity, both at the local and national level. Christian charity demands that individuals and organizations be allowed to provide necessary assistance to the poor, the sick, the elderly, the disabled, and victims of natural disasters and other calamities. *Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right.*

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate support public assistance to the most helpless of society (homeless, unemployed, and those poverty stricken) to provide basic human necessities to those whom are not completely sustained through private and faith-based charities? Does the candidate advocate social programs that help the poor leave poverty status and become more economically stable through adequate employment?

PROMOTING PEACE – The Just War Doctrine must be adhered to in all military actions. Armed conflict and war must be the *last resort* after diplomacy and sanctions have failed. Deadly force should only be used to repel unjust aggressors and there should be a reasonable hope of success and the use of proportionate means while always avoiding direct targeting of non-combatants. Nations have a duty to defend, protect and rescue their citizens from all enemies, foreign & domestic, who seek to cause immanent harm. Military engagement should be defensive and a deterrent for future hostile actions from enemy nations and terrorist groups or individuals. Strategic use of the military force outside a just war scenario should be: necessary, precise, and proportionate (least amount of property damage and loss of human life). Likewise, military personnel, especially those deployed in dangerous missions and those engaged in active battle should be given full support and all the necessary help needed for victory and with the goal of avoiding prolonged deployment. Spiritual care of Catholics in the armed forces is essential and the military should not deny, deter, or dissuade the religious ministry of clergy, military or civilian.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate espouse support for the troops, especially when deployed? Does he/she advocate limited use of military force after diplomatic and economic attempts have failed? Does he/she support a proportionate response to unjust attacks/aggression?

MIGRATION – all men, women, and children are human beings and as such are persons made in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, people fleeing from religious and political persecution, especially those in danger of death or imprisonment, have a right to emigrate (flee) to freedom into a country where they can enjoy fundamental rights. *The Gospel mandate to “welcome the stranger” requires Catholics to care for and stand with newcomers, including unaccompanied immigrant children, refugees and asylum-seekers, those unnecessarily detained, and victims of human trafficking.* Economic as well as medical hardship should be given consideration although nations have a natural right to enact and enforce immigration laws, procedures, and policies that seek to protect the common good of already existing citizens, most of all for national security. *Comprehensive reform is urgently necessary to fix a broken immigration system.* Immigrations quotas should not be based on race or ethnicity but countries of origin especially those with designated as terrorist regimes or strongholds may be used as reasons to defer, delay or deny entrance. *Likewise, balancing the limited amount of*

resources in a country and the individual needs of applicant immigrants is a constant struggle. While immigration laws must be upheld and honored, humanitarian assistance should be made accessible to those awaiting permanent or temporary legal residency. Finally, those in a country illegally and without documentation never lose their basic human rights but as non-citizens, they do not per se enjoy all civil rights afforded to full legal citizens. They should always be treated humanely. Justice and public safety are to be standard goals and requirements in the migration process.

QUESTIONS: Does the candidate endorse the principal that innocent victims of persecution have a natural right to legally apply for asylum? Is he/she committed to reforming and improving current immigration laws that respect the dignity of all human persons while at the same time upholding the duty of protecting the common good and national defense of all present citizens?

OTHER ISSUES – If a candidate’s positions on the above issues conform to the Natural Law and the moral teachings of the Magisterium, a Catholic should also consider these issues when evaluating and electing those for public office:

Combating Racism & Unjust Discrimination;
Promoting Justice and Countering Violence;
Care for Our Common Home (ecology & environment);
Social Communications, Media, and Culture;
Global Solidarity

NOTA BENE: The Right to Life is always the first and foremost and fundamental right above all others and must be given the highest consideration when electing a public leader.

A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who takes a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, such as abortion or euthanasia, if the voter’s intent is to support that position. In such cases a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in grave evil. Voting for them for other reasons (i.e., you do not agree with their position on abortion) would be material cooperation in evil. If there is reasonable certainty that the candidate will pursue such evil, then voting for him/her would also be cooperation in evil. When all candidates hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter may vote for the candidate less likely to advance such a morally flawed position & more likely to pursue other authentic human goods (e.g., if both candidates are not 100% pro-life as one favors unrestricted abortions while the other is against most abortions except in cases of rape or incest, one may then choose the latter person who will save more innocent lives).

letter from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith by then Cardinal Prefect, Josef Ratzinger (now Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI) “Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion” in 2004