

Colleen Kammer, October 29, 2018
Sisters of the Precious Blood

Faithful Citizenship

As Catholics and as citizens of the United States, we are called upon to participate in the election of our government officials. Indeed, this duty is rooted in our baptismal call to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all that we do. We are very fortunate to be able to exercise our freedom in this manner even though our country's politics can be discouraging, frustrating and, at many a juncture, unjust.

Having just returned from a trip to the New England states, where our country's forefathers and mothers debated about what kind of a land they wanted to live in and what its governance should be, I am reminded of the power that each of us has to influence our government and to bring about positive change in our world.

In a prayer he once offered for politicians, Pope Francis stated, "We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern."

It can be difficult to navigate the complex issues that come up for a vote or to decide which candidate will best uphold the values that we Catholics hold dear. Utilizing Catholic teaching to form one's conscience is a life-long task; it is accomplished by understanding Church teaching, prayerful reflection, information gathering, discussion with others, etc.

To aid Catholics in their participation in our democracy, the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) offers a guidance document, [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#). It contains a reflection on Catholic teaching and political life, a summary of the Bishops' policy positions and Catholic statements on moral issues. I recommend it to further inform, to challenge and to add to the development of your Catholic conscience. You can find it on the bishops' website, usccb.org.

For those registered to vote in Ohio, the Ohio Bishop's Conference web site: [Ohio Catholic Conference](#), can be consulted for election issues and information. Similarly, there are also Catholic conferences in 42 of our nation's states.

Our Church – its people - help to shape the moral character of our society. We act with others and through institutions for the benefit of all. Pope Francis reminds us in *The Joy of the Gospel*, "An authentic faith always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. The Earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters."