

# “I’m Catholic, How Should I Discern?” Conscience, Discernment, and Voting as an Act of Love

September 29, 2020

[CatholicClimateCovenant.org](https://CatholicClimateCovenant.org)



**Catholic Climate Covenant**<sup>sm</sup>  
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

## Prayer: Your Heart Today

Where there is fear I can allay,  
Where there is pain I can heal,  
Where there are wounds I can bind,  
And hunger I can fill:  
Lord, grant me courage,  
Lord, grant me strength,  
Grant me compassion  
That I may be your heart today.  
Where there is hate I can confront,  
Where there are yokes I can release,  
Where there are captives I can free  
And anger I can appease:

Lord, grant me courage,  
Lord, grant me strength,  
Grant me compassion  
That I may be your heart today.  
When comes the day I dread  
To see our broken world,  
Protect me from myself grown cold  
That your people I may behold.  
And when I've done all that I could,  
Yet, there are hearts I cannot move,  
Lord, give me hope,  
That I may be your heart today.

*- Fr. Manoling Francisco, SJ*



Catholic Climate Covenant™  
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# Control Panel >>>>

## Your Participation

Open and close your control panel

Submit questions and comments via the Questions panel.

Audio is available only through your computer (no phone audio for attendees with this webcast).

**Note:** Today's presentation is being recorded and will be provided within 48 hours.



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# “I’m Catholic, How Should I Discern?” Conscience, Discernment, and Voting as an Act of Love



**Dan DiLeo, Ph.D.**

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Initiatives Ignatian Solidarity Network

**Moderator: Jose Aguto, Catholic Climate Covenant**



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# A Season of Creation Webinar Series

ON THE COMMON GOOD & OUR COMMON HOME

## WEBINAR 3: "I'M CATHOLIC, HOW SHOULD I DISCERN? CONSCIENCE, DISCERNMENT, AND VOTING AS AN ACT OF LOVE"

Daniel R. DiLeo, PhD

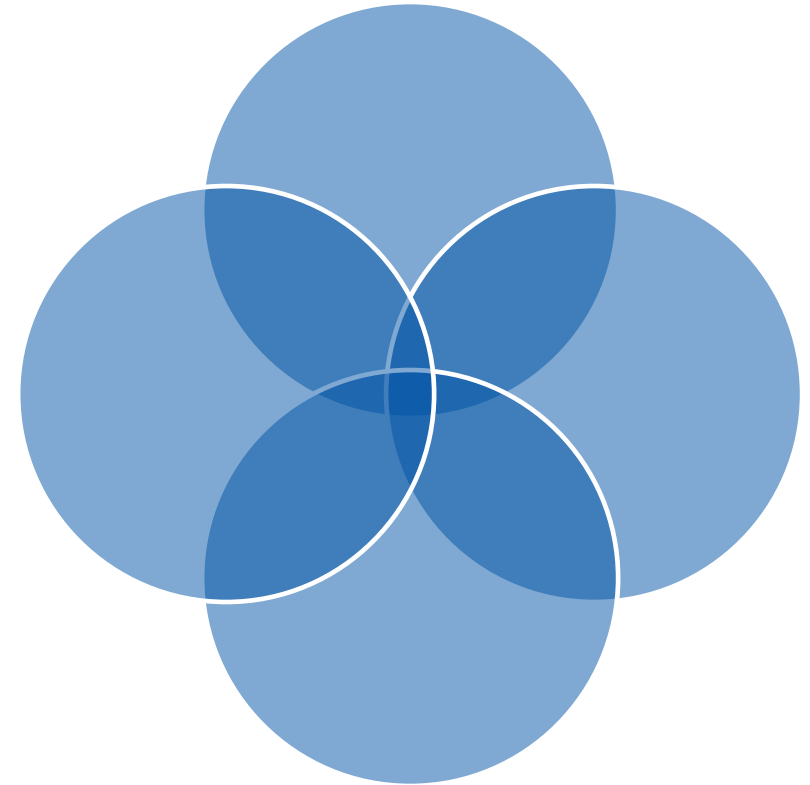
Assistant professor and director of the Justice and Peace Studies Program at Creighton University

# Conscience

- “The most secret core and sanctuary of a person. There [s/]he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in [her/]his depths” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 16).
  1. **Capacity** to know / do the good (*Gula, Reason Informed by Faith*, p. 131).
  2. **Process** of moral discernment about right actions (*Ibid.*).
  3. **Judgment** about right action (*Ibid.*).
  4. **Locus** of human freedom through which we enact or reject God’s love and in which human dignity is grounded (*Cf. Dignitatis Humanae*, no. 3).
    - “The Catholic tradition has long attested to the *primacy, dignity, and inviolability* of the moral conscience” (*Gula*, p. 130, emphases added).
      - “A human being must always obey the *certain* judgment of [her/]his conscience” (*Catechism*, no. 1790, emphasis added) . . . even amidst criticism from or conflict with an authority (*Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, ST I-II Q. 19, aa. 5-6*).
- “Ultimately, conscience is the whole person’s commitment to values and the judgment one must make in light of that commitment to apply those values” (*Gula*, p. 131).

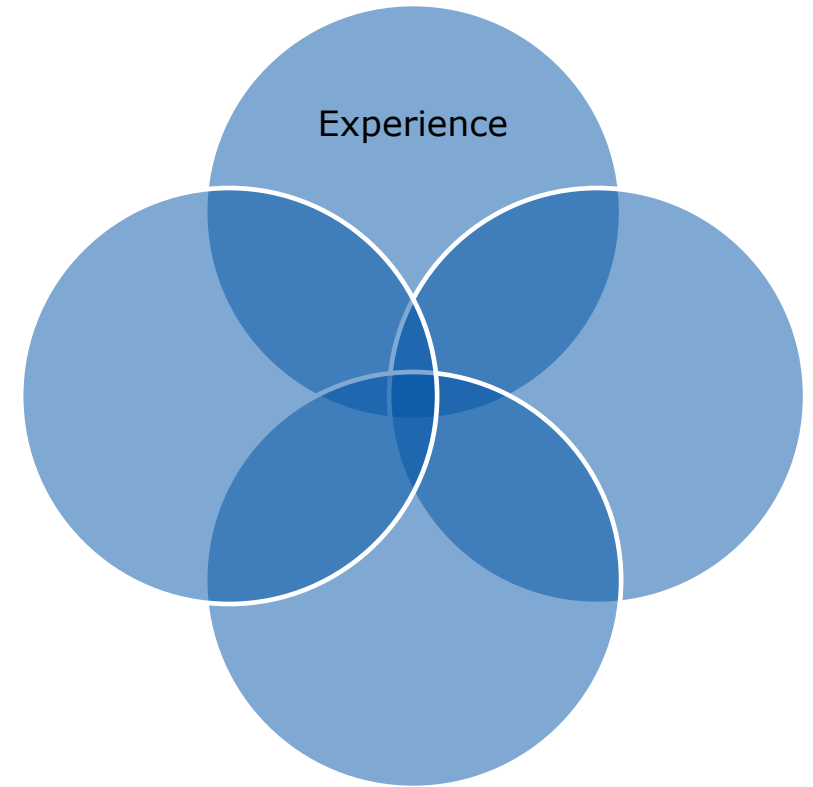
# Conscience Formation

- “Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened . . . The education of the conscience is a lifelong task” (*Catechism*, nos. 1783-1784).
- Goals: “Correct seeing and right thinking” (Gula, p. 133).
- “Four Sectors of Sources for Moral Theology” (Bretzke, *A Morally Complex World*, p. 21).



# Conscience Formation

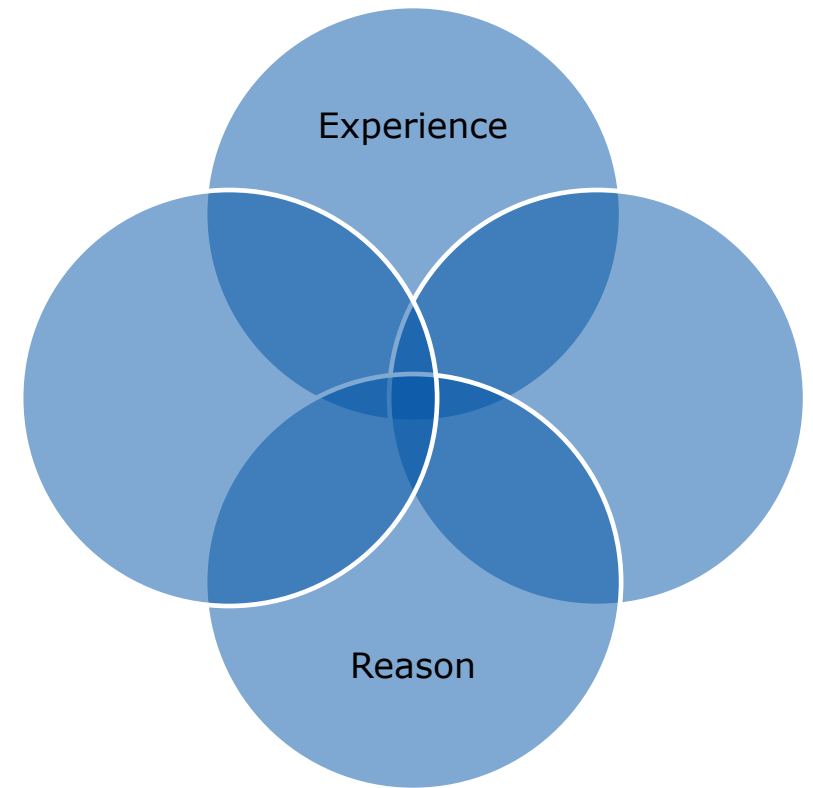
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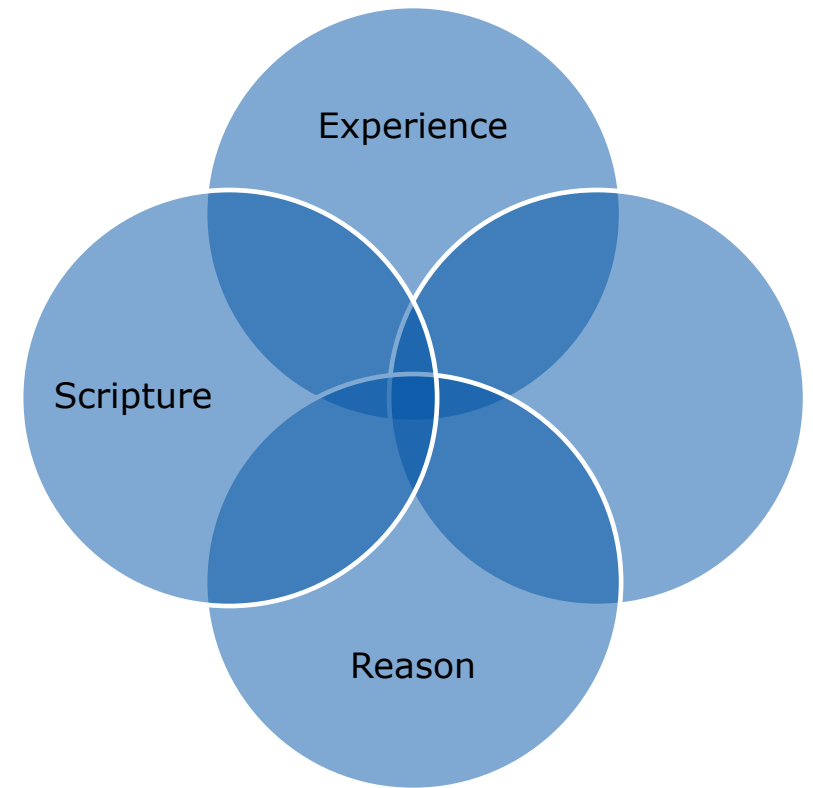
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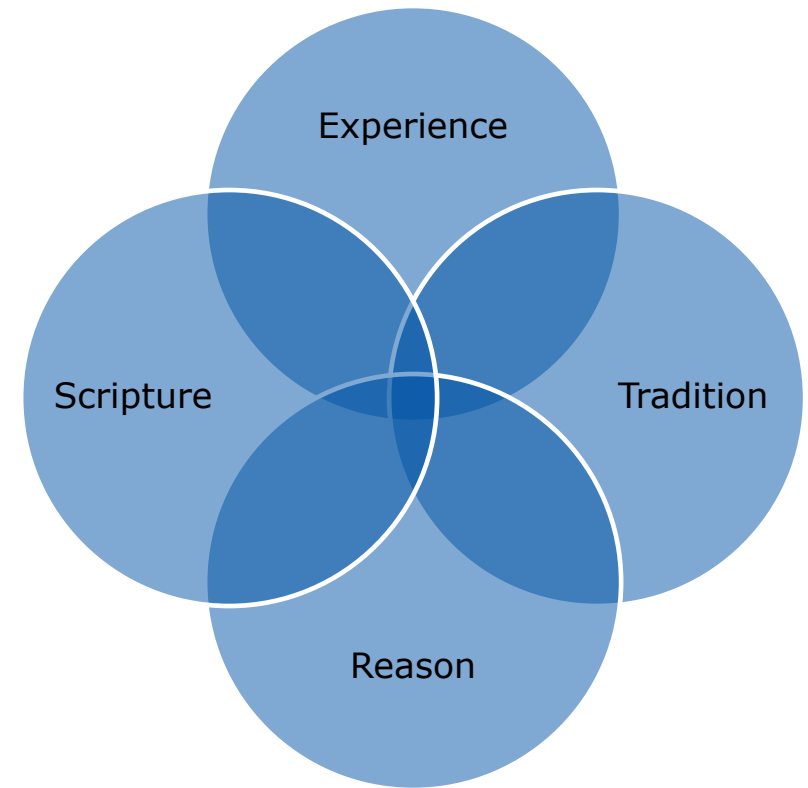
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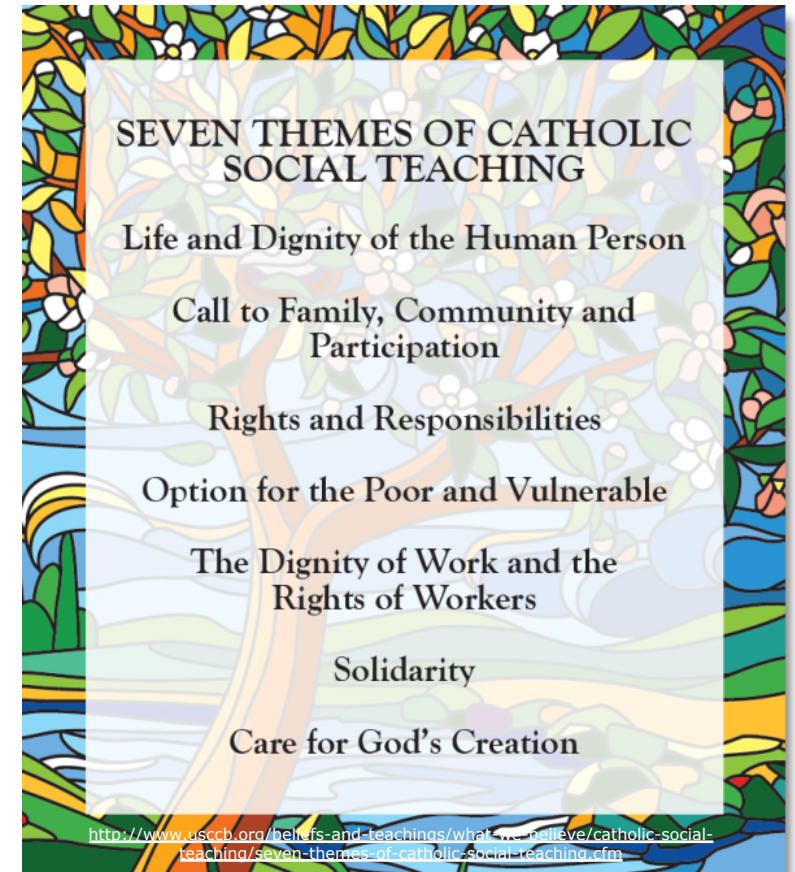
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# Conscientious Voting – Values

- Values: “Abstract ideals” or “ideas . . . about what is desirable, proper, good, and bad” (Giddens et al., *Introduction to Sociology*, p. 54).
  - “Essentially, these values are: truth, freedom, justice, love” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 197).
- “An authentic faith . . . always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 183).
- Two approaches:
  - “Layered, or lexically ordered; that is, the first or ‘fundamental’ level must be secured completely before we can turn to the second, and so on” (Kaveny, *Law’s Virtues*, p. 258).
  - “An intricate herringbone pattern . . . [that] must all be integrated tightly into the pattern for the wall to stand upright” (Ibid.).
    - “It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’*, n. 138).
    - Voting discernment considers how to promote interconnected values.



# Conscientious Voting – Candidates

- Voting supports candidates – not issues (Bishop Robert W. McElroy, “Bishop McElroy on voting with faith and a conscience,” *National Catholic Reporter*; Kaveny, *Law’s Virtues*, p. 198; ).
  - Voting discernment considers how **candidates** will promote (or undermine) interconnected values.
    - Considerations (Kaveny, p. 199, quoted directly):
      - 1. Competence**—Does the candidate have the intellectual capacity, the experience, the temperament, and the judgment to do the job?
      - 2. Character**—Does the candidate have a good set of moral values and the integrity to pursue them in situations of temptation and fear?
      - 3. Collaboration**—Can the candidate work well with other people, both political allies and opponents?
      - 4. Connections**—[Influences] e.g., party affiliations, lobbyists, and corporate and individual donors.
    - Issue stance: **Judges** something a problem, **diagnoses** a cause, **proposes** a solution (Ibid., p. 201).
      - Provides insights into her/his competence, character, collaboration, and connections (Ibid.).
      - Reveals priorities (Ibid., 203-205).
        - Fundamental, amenable to change, urgent (timeliness, severity vis-à-vis values, etc.).
        - Discernment of interconnected values requires discernment of interconnected issues.
      - Indicates how a candidate will likely promote or undermine integrated values.

# Conscientious Voting – Issues

- “The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority” (USCCB, *Forming Consciences*, p. 6).
  - This statement alone is issue-based—not candidate-based or interconnected values-based.
  - “As Catholics we are not single-issue voters” (Ibid., no. 42).
    - “Our defence of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection . . . Some Catholics consider [migration] a secondary issue compared to the ‘grave’ bioethical questions. That a politician looking for votes might say such a thing is understandable, but not a Christian” (Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, n. 101-2).
  - Non-infallible prudential judgment owed “serious consideration when [Catholics] are forming their own views” (U.S. bishops, *The Challenge of Peace*, Introduction)—but with which Catholics may conscientiously disagree.
    - “It could be argued that creation is the preeminent issue because without the environment to sustain human life you can’t have human life” (Bishop John E. Stowe, “Environment, other issues beyond abortion are critical in voting, bishop says,” *National Catholic Reporter*).
  - Even if one agrees, Church teaching allows for—requires—conscientious discernment of most prudent strategies to reduce abortion.
- “We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them” (Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 37).

# Conscientious Voting – Intrinsic Evil

- Act that is always wrong and cannot ever be justified (*Catechism*, no. 1753).
  - “[E]xamples of such acts: ‘Whatever is hostile to life itself, such as any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia . . . ; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce . . . ; whatever is offensive to human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution and trafficking in women and children; degrading conditions of work which treat labourers as mere instruments of profit’ (Saint John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 80; Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 27).
- *Does not* communicate anything about the relative moral gravity of an act or how one should approach cooperation with the intrinsic evil of another (Kaveny, “Intrinsic Evil and Political Responsibility: Is the concept of intrinsic evil helpful to the Catholic voter?” *America Magazine*).
  - “The term ‘intrinsic evil’ has moved far beyond the technical use traditionally employed in Catholic action theory: it is evocative, not analytical . . . prophetic language” to strongly denounce particular issues (Kaveny, *Law’s Virtues*, p. 232-233).
    - Narrowly shifts the focus from values (life, dignity, integrity of creation, etc.) to issues.
      - Values exist in “an intricate herringbone pattern” (Kaveny, *Law’s Virtues*, p. 258).
      - Values transcend issues.

# Conscientious Voting - Cooperation

- Cooperation with evil
  - Formal Cooperation: One acts foreseeing and intending to advance the evil of another; never permissible.
  - Material Cooperation: One “foresees but does not intend that his or her action will” advance the evil of another (Kaveny, p. 248); permissible under some circumstances.
    - “When a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons” (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Vatican, US Bishops: On Catholics in Political Life,” *Origins* 34, no. 7 (2004): 133).
      - “Reason” is a value at stake (Gula, p. 273).
      - “Proportionate” means balance among the interconnected values at stake—especially recognizing that values cut across issues.
        - “The death toll from abortion is more immediate, but the long-term death toll from unchecked climate change is larger and threatens the very future of humanity” (Bishop Robert W. McElroy, “Bishop McElroy on voting with faith and a conscience,” *National Catholic Reporter*).
    - **Conscientious prudential assessment of how *candidates* will impact *interconnected values* that *transcend issues*.**
      - **Competence, character, collaboration, cooperation, issue stances, and evidence-based strategies.**



# Conscientious Voting



Catholic Climate Covenant™  
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.




Credit: Mary-Paula Cancienne, RSM

The U.S. bishops call Catholics to “apply a consistent moral framework to issues facing the nation and world” and “shape their choices in elections in the light of Catholic Social Teaching.” Just as St. Francis of Assisi demonstrated throughout his life, we too must put our love into action. Ahead of the November 3 U.S. election, pledge to enact love and vote informed by the fullness of Catholic Social Teaching.


“I pledge to vote with love in action in mind so as to protect life, respect human dignity, and promote the common good, including God’s gift of creation.”

Sign the pledge below!

<https://bit.ly/PledgeVoteLoveinAction>




Creighton  
UNIVERSITY




Markoe-DePorres  
Annual Social Justice Lecture  
Justice and Peace Studies Program

## Voting and Catholicism

A Critical Discussion of  
*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*



Most Reverend John E. Stowe, OFM Conv.,  
Bishop of Lexington, KY





Cathleen Kaveny, JD, PhD,  
Darald and Juliet Libby Professor of  
Theology and Law at Boston College

“A ‘good’ Catholic cannot vote for...”  
“...must be the **preeminent concern** for Catholic voters.”  
“You’re **Catholic in Name Only** if you vote for...”

Have you ever heard these things? Or wondered how to respond?

Join the Creighton University  
Justice and Peace Studies Program’s  
2020 Markoe-DePorres  
Annual Social Justice Lecture  
**This year via Zoom**

**October 20, 7-9 PM CDT**  
Register:  
<https://bit.ly/CreightonJPS>



<https://bit.ly/CreightonJPS>

**FORMING  
CONSCIENCES**



**FOR  
FAITHFUL  
CITIZENSHIP**

September 29, 2020

**Jill Rauh**

Director, Education & Outreach  
**USCCB Department of Justice, Peace  
and Human Development**



**FORMING  
CONSCIENCES  
FOR FAITHFUL  
CITIZENSHIP**

A Call to Political Responsibility from the  
Catholic Bishops of the United States

*with New Introductory Letter*



United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

“With renewed hope, we ... are re-issuing *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, our teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics, which provides guidance for all who seek to exercise their rights and duties as citizens.”

- 2019 Introductory Letter, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (FCFC)

# A Call to Participate

“In the Catholic Tradition,  
**responsible citizenship** is a  
**virtue**, and **participation** in  
political life is a **moral**  
**obligation.**”

- FCFC, no. 13

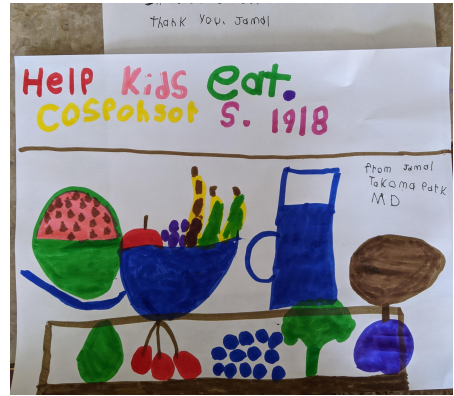


Philip Laubner/CRS

CatholicSocialMinistryGathering.org



# A Call to Form Consciences



# The Process of Conscience Formation

- Approaching issues with an **openness** to seek the truth.
- Studying **Sacred Scripture** and the **teaching** of the Church.
- **Examining facts** and background information.
- **Prayerful reflection**

- FCFC, no. 18



# Two Duties

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“Both opposing evil and doing good are essential obligations.”

- FCFC, no. 24





**FORMING  
CONSCIENCES**

**FOR  
FAITHFUL  
CITIZENSHIP**

## Two Temptations

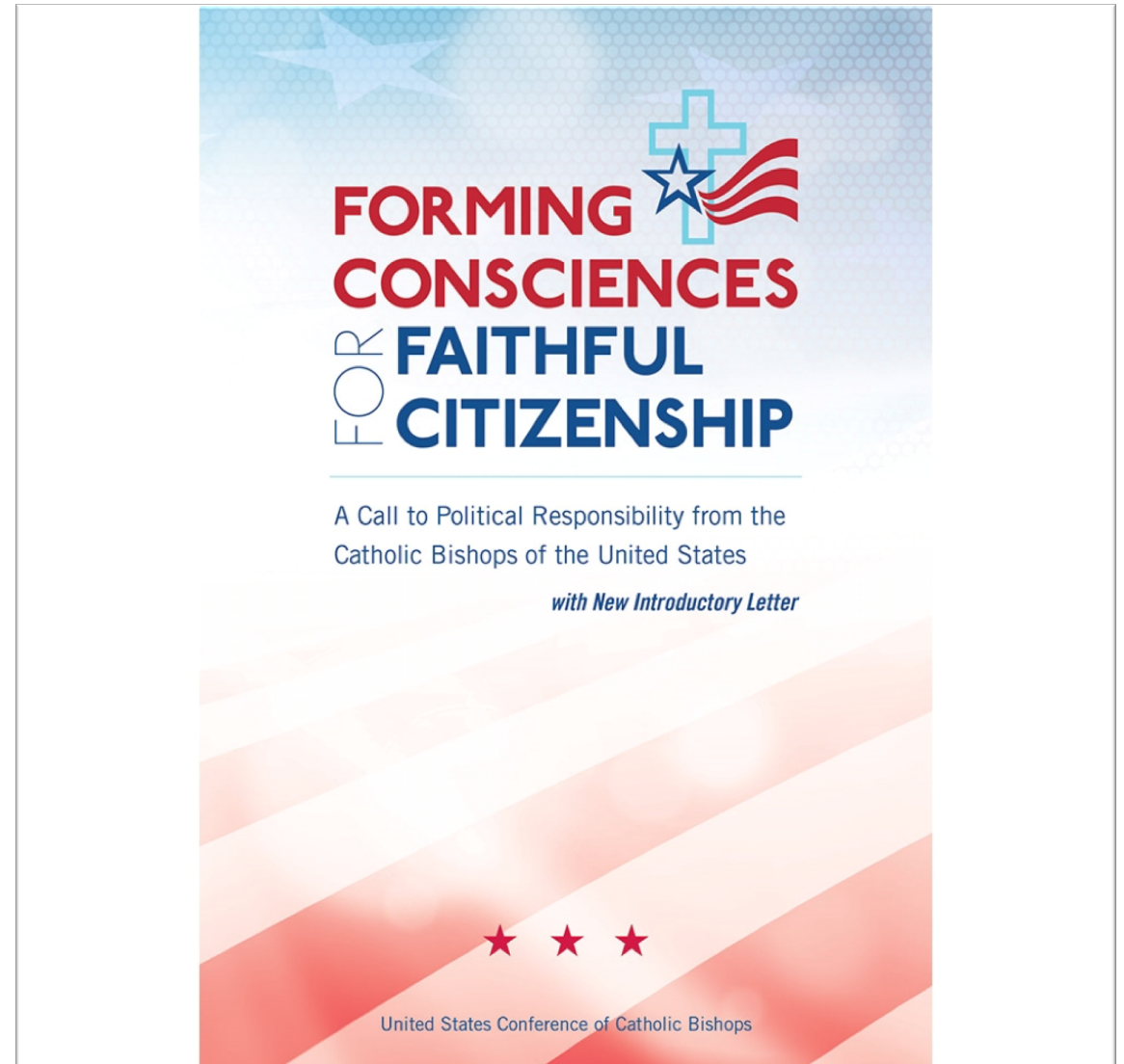
- “**Moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions** between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity” (no. 28).
- “The **misuse** of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of **dismissing or ignoring other serious threats** to human life and dignity” (no. 29).



# Policy Considerations

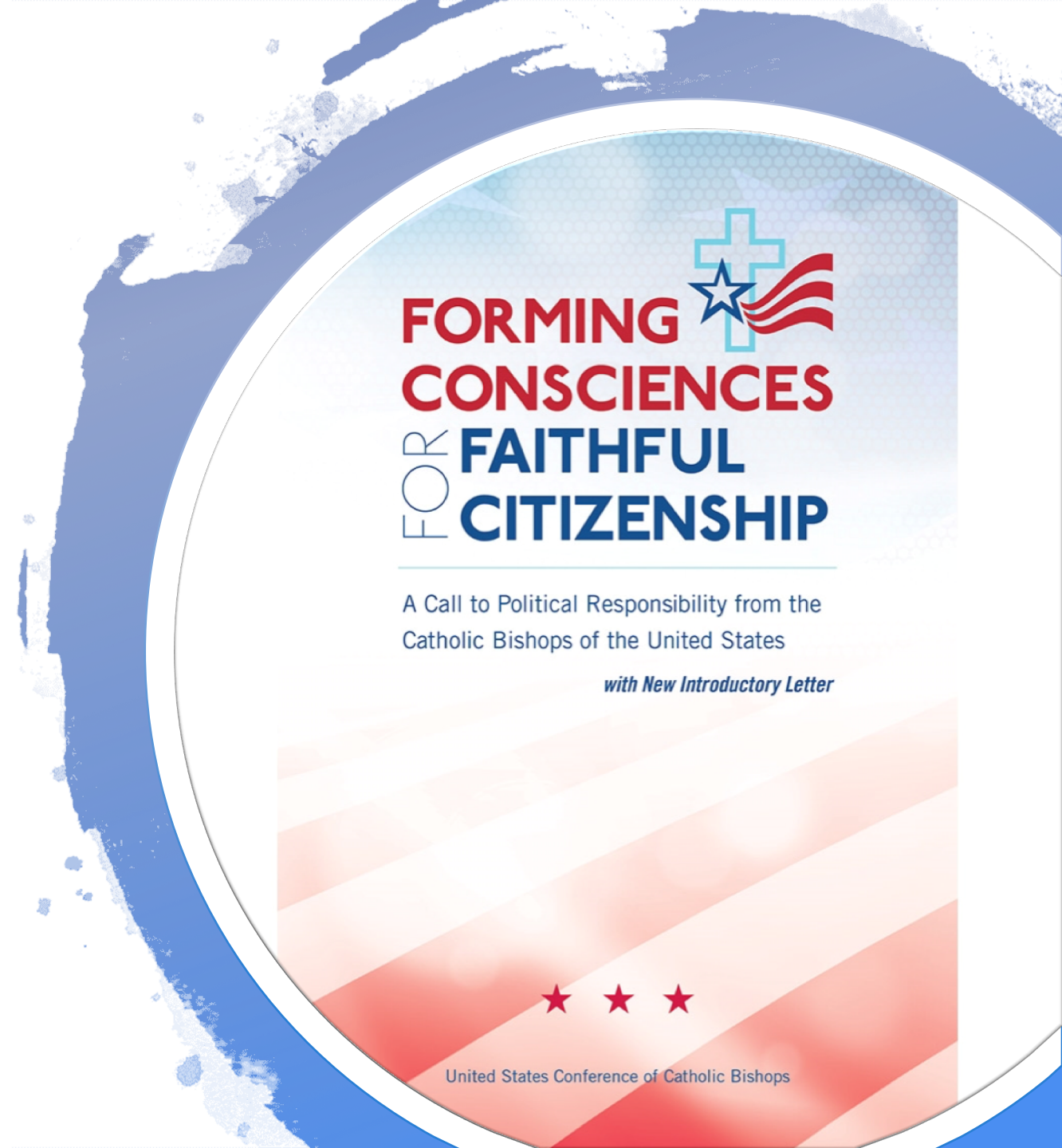
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- Human Life
- Promoting Peace
- Marriage & Family
- Religious Freedom
- Poverty & Economic Justice
- Healthcare
- Migration
- Racism
- Catholic Education
- Promoting Justice/Countering Violence
- Discrimination/Racism
- Care for Our Common Home
- Communications
- Global Solidarity



“In this statement, we bishops do not intend to tell Catholics for whom or against whom to vote.”

- FCFC, no. 7



**FORMING  
CONSCIENCES  
FOR FAITHFUL  
CITIZENSHIP**

A Call to Political Responsibility from the  
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*with New Introductory Letter*

**CIVILIZE IT**



**DIGNITY BEYOND THE DEBATE**

**2020**

- Read the full statement and get resources at [FaithfulCitizenship.org](https://FaithfulCitizenship.org)
- Take the pledge to civility at [CivilizeIt.org](https://CivilizeIt.org)

**VOTING** IS AN ACT OF **LOVE**

**SEPTEMBER 27-OCTOBER 4**

**IGNATIAN NETWORK VOTER REGISTRATION +  
REQUEST YOUR BALLOT WEEK**

# 2020 VOTER REGISTRATION DEADLINES

**ALABAMA** | 10/19

**ALASKA** | 10/04

**ARIZONA** | 10/05

**ARKANSAS** | 10/05

**CALIFORNIA** | 10/19

**COLORADO** | 10/26

**CONNECTICUT** | 10/29

**DELAWARE** | 10/03

**FLORIDA** | 10/05

**GEORGIA** | 10/05

**HAWAII** | 10/05

**IDAHO** | 10/09

**ILLINOIS** | 10/06 (mail)

10/18 (online)

**INDIANA** | 10/05

**IOWA** | 10/24

**KANSAS** | 10/13

**KENTUCKY** | 10/05

**LOUISIANA** |

10/05 (mail)

10/14 (online)

**MAINE** | 10/19

**MARYLAND** | 10/13

**MASSACHUSETTS** | 10/14

**MICHIGAN** | 10/20

**MINNESOTA** | 10/13

**MISSISSIPPI** | 10/05

**MISSOURI** | 10/07

**MONTANA** | 10/05

**NEBRASKA** | 10/16

**NEVADA** | 10/06 (mail);

10/29 (online)

**NEW HAMPSHIRE** | 10/27

**NEW JERSEY** | 10/13

**NEW MEXICO** | 10/06

**NEW YORK** | 10/09

**NORTH CAROLINA** | 10/09

**NORTH DAKOTA** |

none; bring ID to polls

**OHIO** | 10/05

**OKLAHOMA** | 10/09

**OREGON** | 10/13

**PENNSYLVANIA** | 10/19

**RHODE ISLAND** | 10/04

**SOUTH CAROLINA** | 10/05

**SOUTH DAKOTA** | 10/19

**TENNESSEE** | 10/05

**TEXAS** | 10/05

**UTAH** | 10/23

**VERMONT** | 10/05

**VIRGINIA** | 10/13

**WASHINGTON** | 10/26

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** | 10/13

**WEST VIRGINIA** | 10/13

**WISCONSIN** | 10/14

**WYOMING** | 10/19

VOTING IS AN ACT OF **LOVE** 

## 2020 VOTE-BY-MAIL BALLOT REQUEST DEADLINES

**ALABAMA\*\*** | 10/29

**ALASKA** | 10/24

**ARIZONA** | 10/23

**ARKANSAS\*\*** | 10/27

**CALIFORNIA** | 10/27

**COLORADO** | all mail

**CONNECTICUT\*** | 11/02

**DELAWARE\*\*** | 10/30

**FLORIDA** | 10/24

**GEORGIA** | 10/30

**HAWAII** | all mail

**IDAHO** | 10/23

**ILLINOIS** | 10/29

**INDIANA\*** | 10/22

**IOWA** | 10/24

**KANSAS** | 10/27

**KENTUCKY\*** | 10/27

**LOUISIANA\*** | 10/30

**MAINE** | 10/29

**MARYLAND** | 10/27

**MASSACHUSETTS\*\***

| 11/02

**MICHIGAN** | 10/30

**MINNESOTA** | 11/02

**MISSISSIPPI\*** | n/a

**MISSOURI\*\*** | 10/21

**MONTANA** | 11/02

**NEBRASKA** | 10/23

**NEVADA** | 10/20

**NEW HAMPSHIRE\*\*** | n/a

**NEW JERSEY** | 10/27

**NEW MEXICO** | 10/20

**NEW YORK\*** | 10/27

**NORTH CAROLINA** |  
10/27

**NORTH DAKOTA** | n/a

**OHIO** | 10/31

**OKLAHOMA** | 10/27

**OREGON** | all mail

**PENNSYLVANIA** | 10/27

**RHODE ISLAND** | 10/13

**SOUTH CAROLINA\*** |  
10/30

**SOUTH DAKOTA** | 11/02

**TENNESSEE\*\*** | 10/27

**TEXAS\*** | 10/23

**UTAH** | all mail

**VERMONT** | 11/02

**VIRGINIA** | 10/23

**WASHINGTON** | all mail

**WEST VIRGINIA\*\*** | 10/28

**WISCONSIN** | 10/29

**WYOMING** | 11/02

\*excuse necessary \*\*excuse necessary, COVID-19 concerns accepted

VOTING IS AN ACT OF **LOVE** 

# VOTING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

COUNTDOWN TO ELECTION 2020

5

WEEKS

0

DAYS

19

HOURS



REGISTER  
TO  
VOTE



CHECK  
YOUR  
REGISTRATION



SIGN  
THE  
PLEDGE



REQUEST  
MAIL-IN  
BALLOT

# VOTING IS AN ACT OF LOVE



### WHAT'S AT STAKE ECOLOGY

In his historic encyclical on ecology, *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls on all people to care for creation and our common home. Pope Francis makes clear that our care for one another and our care for the earth are intimately connected, noting that humanity is not faced "with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental" (*Laudato Si'*, On Care for Our Common Home). The overlapping crises of global pandemic, racial inequity, increased migration, and climate change throughout 2020 have laid bare the need to respond with immediate action.

A Catholic response to climate change places care for creation and care for poor and vulnerable people who are most affected by climate change impacts at the center of its response. As the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote in their pastoral statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plan for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, "Action to mitigate global climate change must be built upon a foundation of social and economic justice."

#### COVID-19, ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM, AND AIR POLLUTION ROLLSBACKS

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken over 150,000 lives to date in the U.S. and almost 800,000 globally. Studies have shown a direct link between air pollution and a higher death rate due to COVID-19 and yet 2020 has been a year of some of the most extreme air pollution rollbacks in recent history by the U.S. government. Additionally, Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely to live in neighborhoods with higher levels of air pollution. This along with other factors such as occupation, unequal access to health care, and housing, explains data that shows that Black and Hispanic people are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates than white people in the United States. The rollback of air pollution standards in the U.S. at this crucial point in history in relation to public health should be a central priority in the 2020 election.

#### EXTREME HEAT AND MIGRATION

As stated in *Laudato Si'*, "inequity affects not only individuals but entire countries; it compels us to consider an ethic of international relations. A true 'ecological debt' exists, particularly between the global north and south, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment, and certain countries over long periods of time" (51). The historic overconsumption of resources by the U.S. has produced emissions that are intensifying climate change in areas across the globe, making it impossible for people to continue to support themselves due to issues such as prolonged drought or flooding. Projected temperature increases will make 19% of the earth's land uninhabitable for humans, up from the current one percent, which will increase the patterns of migration we have witnessed globally. We must support climate policies that keep in mind the most vulnerable populations and frontline communities threatened by climate change inside and outside of our borders. The environmental policies we have in place in

the U.S. have a global impact as we know that pollution and emissions have no borders.

### THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

In addition to rollbacks on air pollution standards, recent changes were made to a bedrock environmental policy, the National Environmental Policy Act. The changes made to the policy waive the review process for some construction projects, such as pipelines, which means that companies will not need to consider the environmental impacts of certain projects before starting construction. This change makes it easier for industries to get approval for projects without having to disclose expected impacts such as air pollution rates, clear cutting of trees, the amount of waste that might be discharged into the community, and the expected impact greenhouse gas emissions on global warming. At a historical moment when the U.S. needs to be moving towards low carbon infrastructure projects, we must demand that environmental

*As people of faith, we seek elections that creates a just and immediate frontline and vulnerable communities and climate change, increases environmental projects, as well as legislation of climate change, global health*

### QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- What connections do you see between the current crises our country is facing and the support that would be needed to address them?
- What is your stance on environmental protection in light of COVID-19, and how do you plan to address that promote public health and safety?
- What is your plan for addressing climate change towards renewable energy and sustainable development?
- Do you believe that if so, how do you plan to address climate change in environmental policy?
- What steps can we take to address climate change in our country, particularly in the areas of environmental protection and climate change?

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK VOTING IS AN ACT OF LOVE





# VOTING IS AN ACT OF LOVE

JOIN ME! [igsol.net/vote-pledge](https://igsol.net/vote-pledge)

# I'm Catholic, How Should I Discern?" Conscience, Discernment, and Voting as an Act of Love



Credit: Mary-Paula Cancienne, RSM

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Catholic Climate Covenant  
Care for Creation. Care for the Poor.

# “I’m Catholic, How Should I Discern?” Conscience, Discernment, and Voting as an Act of Love

## Questions ?



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For more information: [www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org](http://www.CatholicClimateCovenant.org)

Send questions to: [info@CatholicClimateCovenant.org](mailto:info@CatholicClimateCovenant.org)