

## Forming Our Consciences

for voting and for public policy formation

Basilica of St. Mary

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### A. Making moral decisions: A lifelong conversion to what is true and good

Forming our conscience is a lifelong effort to bring our choices and actions in line with the kind of person we want ourselves to be. It is about continually working to make our daily choices reflect what we believe to be true and good.

Mark 1:14-15

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

*On the Development of Peoples*, 15. Pope Paul VI, 1967

(Catholic social teaching)

In the design of God each of us is called upon to develop and fulfill ourselves, for every life is a vocation. At birth we are granted a set of aptitudes and qualities to bring to fruition. Their coming to maturity, which will be the result of education received from the environment and personal efforts, will allow each of us to direct ourselves toward the destiny intended for us by the Creator.

### B. Engaging the issues (examples)

1. Medicaid / public assistance / budgets
2. Immigration

### C. Resources

1. The Basilica of St. Mary website ([www.mary.org](http://www.mary.org)) -- Voices for Justice
2. Catholic Charities / Office of Social Justice ([www.cctwincities.org](http://www.cctwincities.org)) (click "Advocate / Educate")
3. Justice for Immigrants (USCCB) ([www.justiceforimmigrants.org](http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org))
4. *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*  
(U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2000) (<http://nccbuscc.org/mrs/welcome.shtml>)
5. *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*  
(Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States) (google: "strangers no longer")

### Preferential option for the poor

"In teaching us charity, the Gospel instructs us in the preferential respect due to the poor and the special situation they have in society: the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others."

(*A Call to Action*, 23. Pope Paul VI, 1971)

### Welcoming immigrants

"Without condoning undocumented migration, the Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country."

(*Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*, p. 11. U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2000)

### The right to migrate

"The Church recognizes that all the goods of the earth belong to all people. When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have the right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right."

(*Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, #35. Catholic Bishops of Mexico and the United States, 2003)

## Forming Our Consciences

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May 6, 2012

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### A. Making moral decisions: A Part of Our Life Within the Community of Faith

Becoming the person we desire to be – the person God has called us to be – is not a solitary journey. It happens within our community of faith. Those with whom we share the Eucharist are also the ones who guide us in this lifelong conversion, in this effort to form our conscience.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

*Church in the Modern World*, 32. Second Vatican Council, 1965 (Catholic social teaching)

God did not create us for life in isolation, but for the formation of social unity. So also, it has pleased God to make us holy and save us not merely as individuals, without any mutual bonds, but by making us into a single people, a people which acknowledges God in truth and serves God in holiness.

### B. Engaging the issues (examples)

#### 1. Health care reform

##### General points

(from Catholic social teachings)

- a) leading to universal access
- b) through any number of approaches
- c) at some cost to society

##### Specific concerns

(from the U.S. Catholic bishops)

- a) affordable and accessible
- b) exclude mandated coverage of abortion  
and maintain current laws restricting abortion
- d) uphold freedom of conscience protections

## 2. Voting

### Priority areas

(from Catholic social teachings)

- a) defend life
- b) promote the common good
- c) attend to persons who are poor and/or vulnerable

### Concerns about forming our consciences

(from the U.S. Catholic bishops)

- a) not all issues are morally equal

"Two temptations in public life can distort the Church's defense of human life and dignity; The first is a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity." [FCFC 27, 28]

- b) not vote on just one or two issues

"The second is the misuse of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of dismissing or ignoring other serious threats to human life and dignity." [FCFC 29]

- c) making difficult choices when there is no perfect candidate

"A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who takes a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, such as abortion or racism, if the voter's intent is to support that position." [FCFC 34]

"There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position may decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons." [FCFC35]

## C. Resources

1. The Basilica of St. Mary website ([www.mary.org](http://www.mary.org))      Voices for Justice
2. Catholic Charities / Office of Social justice ([www.cctwincities.org](http://www.cctwincities.org))      (click "Advocate / Educate")
3. Minnesota Catholic Conference ([www.mncc.org](http://www.mncc.org))      (state issues)
3. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org))      (national issues)
4. Catholic Relief Services ([www.crs.org](http://www.crs.org))      (global issues)
5. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*      (preparing to vote)  
([www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org))