



DIOCESE OF WINONA-ROCHESTER

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our nation has already entered the voting process, as we move toward Election Day on November 3, 2020. As citizens and Catholics, there are serious choices facing us this election cycle. Our lives are already complicated by adjusting to the COVID-19 protocols, by responding to racism, the unrest and public protests and violence in our country. All of this causes anxiety, but, more importantly, it moves us to work for the common good. Pope Francis, in his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, reminded us that “by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Fraternity between all men and women” (8).

As Catholics we are called to give public witness to our faith, so we can live as brothers and sisters. Jesus tells us “You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden” (Mt 5:14). To be a city on a mountain, we are to bring our faith and values into the world, and work for the common good. Preparation for voting is essential as we cast our ballots and work toward a more just and compassionate society built on solidarity and fraternity.

It is not my place to tell you who to vote for, but it is my responsibility to share with you a process and resources that will both inform and form your conscience.

First: Pray – Prayer should precede and follow each step of the voting process. Invite the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind and heart about the issues and the candidates. The Holy Spirit is our advocate, counselor and the fire of love, who will lead you into all truth. Let civility, not divisive politics, move us all toward the common good. As St. Paul said, “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just...think about these things” (Phil 4:8).

Second: Study – It is also necessary to learn about the issues and the candidates on the ballot. You can download the document, [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility](#), which is authored by the Catholic Bishops of the United States and updated every election cycle. There are also other resources from the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), such as parish guidelines for political activity and an election novena. All documents are available on our diocesan website, <https://www.dowr.org/voting-resources.html>.

Third: Form Your Conscience – In living out our faith, and forming our consciences, moral choices are necessary to become that city on a mountaintop. It is important that we take the time to understand what the Church teaches on the various issues facing our nation, and not rely on popular opinion or media sound bites. The nation’s Catholic bishops have identified abortion as a preeminent issue of our day, because abortion is the direct taking of an innocent life. Other life issues however, cannot be ignored such as racism, poverty, homelessness, human trafficking, the death penalty, immigration policy reform, care for the environment, etc. They are life issues that

are connected integrally to the sacredness of life that begins at conception. Also of particular concern for people of faith is the upholding of religious liberty, which is essential to the Church's ability to operate freely according to her own conscience for the evangelization and sanctification of both individuals and our nation as a whole.

Fourth: Discern and Vote – Every vote counts and as citizens and Catholics we have the right to participate in a democratic process that is denied to many of our brothers and sisters around the world. Your vote matters, so be sure to pray, study, form your conscience, seek to discern these important issues and cast your ballot. A well-formed conscience should lead you to vote for a candidate who is working for results that are consistent with a life of faith. No candidate fully embodies a Catholic perspective on all issues.

Know that my prayers are with you as we enter the current election season and blessed are you because “You are the salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13).

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Rev. John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona-Rochester