

Session A

Theme: The Call to Faithful Citizenship



Scripture Reading & Discussion Questions

A Reading from Mark 12:28-34:

One of the scribes, when he came forward and heard them disputing and saw how well he had answered them, asked him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?"

Jesus replied, "The first is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

The scribe said to him, "Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, 'He is One and there is no other than he.'

And 'to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself' is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

And when Jesus saw that (he) answered with understanding, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) Jesus says that both loving God and loving neighbor bring a person closer to the kingdom of God. How does a deep faith life help us to love others? How does being compassionate toward others affect us spiritually?
- 2) The reading instructs that you should love your neighbor *as yourself*. What would it look like to really love another person as you love yourself? Is your current perspective of service or charity one in which you see the poor and vulnerable just as you see yourself?
- 3) How do the two commandments relate to the idea of faithful citizenship?
- 4) How can the two commandments be seen as a foundation for all the other commandments? If our society were to embrace "love for neighbor" as a central idea governing our laws and policies, how might society be different?
- 5) What changes can you make in your own life to love God and neighbor better?

Faithful Citizenship Reading & Discussion Questions

Readings from *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*:

What faith teaches about the dignity of the human person and about the sacredness of every human life helps us see more clearly the same truths that also come to us through the gift of human reason. At the center of these truths is respect for the dignity of every person. This is the core of Catholic moral and social teaching. Because we are people of both faith and reason, it is appropriate and necessary for us to bring this essential truth about human life and dignity to the public square. We are called to practice Christ's commandment to "love one another" (Jn 13:34). We are also called to promote the well-being of all, to share our blessings with those most in need, to defend marriage, and to protect the lives and dignity of all, especially the weak, the vulnerable, the voiceless (no. 10).

In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us, "it is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person. . . . As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life" (nos. 1913-1915) (no. 13).

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How do you feel about the bishops' teaching that active involvement in the political process is a "moral obligation"?
- 2) What obstacles do you personally feel stand in the way of you becoming more politically active in the upcoming elections?
- 3) What connections do you see between the reading from Mark and the bishops' statement about faithful citizenship?
- 4) In what ways can you help build a society in which the dignity of all human life is respected?