



GENERAL PRAYER AND REFLECTION RESOURCES

The challenge of inviting Catholics to exercise “faithful citizenship” requires more than instruction and formation in the Church’s social teaching. Our tradition of worship, centered in the Eucharist, also calls Catholics to put their faith into action in the political arena. The connection between liturgy and life is learned through participation in worship experiences that enlighten our spirits and move our hearts to action. An important section of the Catechism of the Catholic Church says, in fact, “The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the Body and Blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest, his brethren.” (#1397)

Parishes can provide prayer and reflection experiences that help parishioners understand more deeply these connections: how to recognize Christ in the poorest and most vulnerable, and then how to respond to the call to act on their behalf through political involvement. The following resources can help individuals and groups as they prayerfully reflect on the challenges of faithful citizenship.

Scripture Readings

Dt 24:17-22

Zec 7:9-10

Lk 10:25-37

Jer 22:16

Mt 25:31-46

Jas 2:14-17

Lk 4:18

Intercessory Prayers

The following intercessions may be used periodically throughout the year.

For the people of the United States, that we may be united in building a society in which everyone can live with dignity and hope, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For the Church, that we may be a witness to Christ’s love by practicing charity and promoting justice and peace throughout the world, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For Catholics throughout our nation, that the values of our faith may guide us as we exercise our responsibility as voters, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For the members of this community, that we may find ways to help build a world of greater respect for human life and human dignity, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For those who serve in elected office, that they may lead with courage and wisdom, reflecting the Church’s teaching that the moral test of our society is how the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable are faring, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For all citizens of the United States, that our participation in the upcoming election may lead to a world of greater justice and peace, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For those who are suffering from poverty and injustice, that our decisions this election year may lead to policies and programs that help them live in dignity, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For parishioners who have been elected to public office, that they might use their offices to protect the unborn and promote the dignity of the poor and vulnerable, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For the earth, that our nation's leaders will be inspired by God's Spirit to protect all of His creation, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For workers around the world, especially children who work long hours for little pay, that we might all seek ways to promote fairness, justice, and dignity in their lives, we pray to the Lord. . . .

For leaders around world, that they might find ways to bring an end to war and violence, and promote peace and development for all nations, we pray to the Lord. . . .

General Prayer

Gracious and loving God, let your Spirit be with us (me) today. Hear our (my) prayers, and increase in us (me) the will to follow your Son Jesus. Help us (me) to draw on the resources of our (my) faith as we (I) use the opportunities of our democracy to shape a society more respectful of the life, dignity, and rights of the human person, especially the poor and vulnerable. We (I) ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Quotes from Catholic Social Teaching

The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society, on the other hand, is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. So they cannot relinquish their participation "in the many different economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural areas, which are intended to promote organically and institutionally the *common good*." The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competences and fulfilling their own responsibility. Even if the specific expressions of ecclesial charity can never be confused with the activity of the State, it still remains true that charity must animate the entire lives of the lay faithful and therefore also their political activity, lived as "social charity".

Pope Benedict XVI
Deus Caritas Est, No. 29

For the Christian people of America conversion to the Gospel means to revise "all the different areas and aspects of life, especially those related to the social order and the pursuit of the common good." It will be especially necessary "to nurture the growing awareness in society of the dignity of every person and, therefore, to promote in the community a sense of the duty to participate in political life in harmony with the Gospel."

Pope John Paul II
The Church in America (Ecclesia in America), No. 27

It must be noted also that a well-formed Christian conscience does not permit one to vote for a political program or an individual law which contradicts the fundamental contents of faith and morals. The Christian faith is an integral unity, and thus it is incoherent to isolate some particular element to the detriment of the whole of Catholic doctrine. A political commitment to a single isolated aspect of the Church's social doctrine does not exhaust one's responsibility towards the common good.

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life, No. 4.

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).

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship, No. 13

This statement highlights the role of the Church in the formation of conscience, and the corresponding moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon the Church's teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience. With this foundation, Catholics are better able to evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates' promises and actions in light of the Gospel and the moral and social teaching of the Church in order to help build a better world.

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Forming Conscience for Faithful Citizenship, No. 5

Other Resources

The following resources are available from the U.S. Bishops' Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD).

Novena for Justice and Peace <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/showproducts.cfm?Step=1&FullCat=134>

A Scriptural Rosary for Justice and Peace
<http://www.usccbpublishing.org/showproducts.cfm?Step=1&FullCat=134>

A Justice Prayer Book <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/showproducts.cfm?Step=1&FullCat=134>

Scripture Guide <http://www.usccbpublishing.org/showproducts.cfm?Step=1&FullCat=134>

Music Suggestions

These songs are available in Worship Third Edition, RitualSong, Gather, Peoples' Mass Book, We Celebrate, JourneySongs, the OCP Music Issue, Glory and Praise, and Lead Me Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal.*

"Go Make a Difference" (Steve Angrisano)

"City of God" (Dan Schutte)

"Free at Last" (African American Spiritual)

"Oh, Freedom" (African American Spiritual)

"God of Our Fathers" (Daniel C. Roberts)

"The Harvest of Justice" (David Haas)

"He Has Anointed Me" (Mike Balhoff)

"Here I Am, Lord" (Dan Schutte)

"Jesus Still Lives" (Suzanne Toolan)

"Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing" (James W. Johnson)

"Send Me, Jesus" (Thuma Mina) (South African)

"We Are Called" (David Haas)

"Who Will Speak" (Marty Haugen)

*The following hymnals are available from GIA Publications Inc., 7404 S. Mason Avenue, Chicago, IL 60638, www.giamusic.com, 800-442-1358.

Worship
RitualSong
Gather
Lead Me Guide Me

The following hymnals are available from OCP Publications, P.O. Box 18030, Portland, OR 97218-0030, www.ocp.org, 800-548-8749.

JourneySong
OCP Music
Glory and Praise

The following hymnals are available from World Library Publications, 3825 N. Willow Road, Schiller Park, IL 60176, www.jspaluch.com, 800-566-6150.

Peoples' Mass Book
We Celebrate