



*FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP*  
HOMILY NOTES  
27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
October 2, 2016  
“Civil Dialogue”

**Introduction**

- In a little more than a month, we will go to the polls to elect the next president of the United States.
- Sadly, the climate in our country right now is one in which such things as inflammatory rhetoric, uncivil accusations, personal attacks, and unrelenting questioning of others’ motives, are commonplace.
- As Catholics, how are we a part of all this? How do we respond, especially during this Year of Mercy?
- The readings today challenge us to be beacons of faith, charity, self-control, and respect—even in the most difficult of circumstances.
- We are called to think and act differently, approaching dialogue with a spirit of love and respect for the dignity of others.

**First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4**

- In the first reading, the prophet Habakkuk is living during a time characterized by “ruin,” “misery,” “destruction and violence,” “strife,” and “clamorous discord” (1:3).
- He begs for God’s intervention. God urges Habakkuk to wait faithfully, for the “the rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live” (2:4).

**Psalms: 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9 and Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14**

- The refrain of today’s Psalm, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts (v. 7-8),” encourages God’s people to take heart, even when everything around them seems tumultuous.
- Likewise, in the second reading, Paul writes to Timothy, one of the early followers of Christianity, who was undoubtedly facing persecution and other hardships. Paul urges Timothy to “stir into flame” (v. 6) God’s spirit of “power and love and self-control” (v. 7), giving testimony to the Gospel, even in a very difficult climate.

**Gospel: Luke 17:5-10**

- Today’s Gospel reading from Luke is preceded by Jesus’ challenge, “If [your brother] wrongs you seven times in one day and returns seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him” (17:4).
- At the beginning of today’s Gospel reading, the apostles respond to this challenge by saying, “Increase our faith” (v. 5).



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- How difficult the challenge of forgiveness sounds to them!
- Yet, Jesus responds to their request for increased faith: “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (17:6).
- Clearly, prayer rooted in deep faith can make the impossible a reality.

### Application

- We are currently in a time in our country where mercy, forgiveness, and love seem to be completely missing in the public square. The incivility in discourse around us may cause us to utter the apostles’ prayer, “Increase our faith!”
- How can we help “stir into flame” love, forgiveness, and self-control, rather than “clamorous discord”? How can we overcome division? During this Year of Mercy, how can we practice mercy in our civil discourse? How can we respect and support the dignity of others, even those with whom we disagree?
- In *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops write:

In public life, it is important to practice the virtues of charity and justice that are at the core of our Tradition . . . [W]e bishops vigorously repeat our call for a renewed kind of politics:

- Focused more on moral principles than on the latest polls
  - Focused more on the needs of the weak than on benefits for the strong
  - Focused more on the pursuit of the common good than on the demands of narrow interests (nos. 60-61)
- During election season, when dialogue is often anything but civil, here are some ideas for how we can be vehicles of Christ’s love and mercy when we talk with others, including those with whom we disagree:
    - We should begin with respect.
    - We should decide neither to degrade the persons, characters, and reputations of others who hold different positions from our own, nor spread rumors, falsehoods, or half truths about them.
    - We should be careful about language we use, avoiding inflammatory words and rhetoric.
    - We should not assign motives to others. Instead, we should assume that our family members, friends, and colleagues are speaking in good faith, even if we disagree with them.
    - We should listen carefully and respectfully to other people.
    - We should remember that we are members of a community, and we should try to strengthen our sense of community through the love and care we show one another.
    - We should be people who express our thoughts, opinions, and positions—but always do so in love and truth.



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- When discussing an issue with others with whom we may disagree, we should imagine that Jesus is in the room with us. How would Jesus' presence change the way we speak or act?

### **Conclusion**

- I encourage you to visit the United States Catholic Bishops' website at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org). The web address is in the bulletin today. There, you can find some resources on how we can promote civil dialogue during election season—and all year round.
- If we can model Christ's love in our civil dialogue, we can begin to change the negative climate in our country during this election season, and beyond.

### **Bulletin Announcement**

#### ***Catholics Care. Catholics Vote. Practice civil dialogue.***

In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the U.S. Catholic bishops remind Catholics that we are called to engage in charitable, respectful and civil dialogue during election season. In a culture that is dominated by “partisan attacks, sound bites and media hype,” the Church calls for “a different kind of political engagement” (no. 14). Visit [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org) to access resources on civil dialogue and on how our faith calls us to engage during election season and beyond.

### **Bulletin Insert**

On Oct. 1-2 weekend, parishes may also wish to use this [bulletin insert](#) (also [en Español](#)) on civil dialogue at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org).



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