

The Call to Put Faith Before Politics

By putting faith before politics, Catholics can help bring the light of the Gospel into our communities to build a more just and merciful world. In a time of deep political division, many Christians face an old temptation: to put political affiliation first and faith second. We see this even in the Gospel, where Jesus was tempted by Satan with political power: a temptation he clearly rejected to stay faithful to his love of the Father (Luke 4:5-8).

Jesus's example offers us a clear way forward today. The call of Christian discipleship is not to abandon our civic responsibility but to place our faith at the center of how we act as citizens. Instead of walking in lockstep with a political party or ideology, faithful citizens are tasked with bringing the truth of our Catholic faith to transform the parties or groups to which we may belong, to better protect the lives and good of all people.

As followers of Christ, we must take seriously the call to form our consciences in light of the entirety of the Church's long social tradition, the lessons of Scripture, and the wisdom of our Holy Father. As Pope Leo teaches, Catholic Social Teaching "offers itself as a foundation for collective discernment, helping to recognize and promote whatever serves the dignity of persons, the vitality of communities and the common good" (*Magnifica humanitas*, no. 24).

We place the sacred dignity of each person at the center of our public life, working to protect the lives and good of all people, never separating our love for God from our love for our neighbor.

Who Is My Neighbor?

As Catholics, we must reflect in a special way on Jesus' answer to the question in the parable of the Good Samaritan: "Who is my neighbor?"

Like the Good Samaritan who stopped his own journey to tend to the robbed and wounded traveler, we are called to care for the most vulnerable, cross social divides, and help those in need, responding to the Lord's command to "love your neighbor as yourself." Because every person possesses God-given dignity, our political choices must respect and protect everyone, seeing each person as neighbor and child of God. We are called to act with mercy, compassion, and justice.

Living Together as One

The politics of today can feel overwhelming, full of vitriol, and lead us to think of our neighbors as adversaries. But that is not the true purpose of politics. Pope Francis reminded us in his 2015 address to Congress that politics is "an expression of our compelling need to live as one, in order to build as one the greatest common good." Building up the common good is a shared effort, calling us to practice love in our communities and work together across our differences.

Just as it was for the Good Samaritan, standing with our neighbors sometimes means caring for people whom society finds difficult to love, even when it provokes pushback or disapproval. This is the challenge of discipleship that Jesus helps us carry. As Christ's disciples, we seek to bring the light of the Gospel into every aspect of our lives. We allow our faith to speak truth to the problems and choices we face every day. We put our *faith before politics*.

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