



## Faithful Citizenship: Forming Consciences

*“We need to participate for the common good. Sometimes we hear: a good Catholic is not interested in politics. This is not true: good Catholics immerse themselves in politics by offering the best of themselves so that the leader can govern.”*

*—Pope Francis, Morning Meditation in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, Monday, September 16, 2013.*

The Catholic Church calls for all individuals to participate in political life to promote the common good. To support this calling, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) offers *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, a teaching document on the political responsibility of Catholics. This resource offers guidance for Catholics in the exercise of their rights and duties as participants in our democracy.

In this issue of the *Messenger*, we will provide resources to assist the faithful with living their responsibility to properly form their consciences; to engage in civil and respectful public dialogue; and to shape political choices in the coming election, and all elections.



### As Catholic citizens, we should remember three things:

(From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*)

1. Respect for the dignity of each person is the core of Catholic social and moral teaching. This is our most basic principle.
2. We focus on the common good, not our own personal interests. We ask, how can we make the world a better place? Not, how can I improve my own personal situation?
3. We have a responsibility—a true obligation—to form our consciences and participate in the civic life of this nation.

### How to Apply *Faithful Citizenship*:

**Be true to the teachings of the Church.** Read Scripture, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, teachings from the Holy See, and the statements of our bishops. Read *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* at [faithfulcitizenship.org](http://faithfulcitizenship.org). We need to be sure that our reasoning and judgments are well-grounded in our faith.

**Stay well-informed about issues** through judicious and reasoned engagement with the immense world of information in the twenty-

first century. Just as all issues are not equal, all sources are not equal. For example, an individual's blog—while potentially very insightful—may not have the same fidelity to factual truth as our media sources that hold themselves to professional standards of journalistic ethics, imperfect though they are.

**Remain in contact with our representatives** in local, state, and federal government. Our responsibility to form our consciences leads to an obligation to be *active citizens*. We communicate regularly with our leaders—not only during election seasons.

**Engage in reasoned, compassionate, and loving dialogue** with others—Catholics and non-Catholics alike—about the issues and choices that we are facing as a nation. Remember that we are called first to witness the Gospel, and through that witness, to share our social teaching, to highlight the moral dimensions of issues, and to participate in debate on public policy.

The dual calling of faith and citizenship lies at the heart of what it means to be a Catholic in the United States. We stand on the shoulders of many Catholics who have gone before us, who have helped the United States of America become a better country because of their faith in a loving God.

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**(Second Vatican Council, Gaudium et Spes, no. 43)**

13. In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. “People in every nation enhance the social dimension of their lives by acting as committed and responsible citizens” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 220). The obligation to participate in political life 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).

14. Unfortunately, politics in our country often can be a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites, and media hype. The Church calls for a different kind of political engagement: one shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable. As Pope Francis reminds us, “Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. . . . I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 205). The Catholic call to faithful citizenship affirms the importance of political participation and insists that public service is a worthy vocation. As citizens, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths or approve intrinsically evil acts. We are called to bring together our principles and our political choices, our values and our votes, to help build a civilization of truth and love.

15. Clergy and lay people have complementary roles in public life. We bishops have the primary responsibility to hand on the Church’s moral and social teaching. Together with priests and deacons, assisted by religious and lay leaders of the Church, we are to teach fundamental moral principles that help Catholics form their consciences correctly, to provide guidance on the moral dimensions of public decisions, and to encourage the faithful to carry out their responsibilities in political life. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the Church’s leaders avoid endorsing or opposing candidates. As Pope Benedict XVI stated in Deus Caritas Est,

The Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest... The Church cannot and must not take upon herself the political battle to bring about the most just society possible. She cannot and must not replace the State. Yet at the same time she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice (no. 28).

16. As the Holy Father also taught in Deus Caritas Est, “The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful” (no. 29). This duty is more critical than ever in today’s political environment, where Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and too few candidates fully share the Church’s comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death. Yet this is not a time for retreat or discouragement; rather, it is a time for renewed engagement. Forming their consciences in accord with Catholic teaching, Catholic lay women and men can become actively involved: running for office; working within political parties; communicating their concerns and positions to elected officials; and joining diocesan social mission or advocacy networks, state Catholic conference initiatives, community organizations, and other efforts to apply authentic moral teaching in the public square. Even those who cannot vote have the right to have their voices heard on issues that affect their lives and the common good.

To access the entire document, visit the USCCB website: [www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf)

**Important Dates To Remember:**

- Oct.  
25

In-person absentee voting begins, under a new elections law. The no-excuse absentee voting period requires a valid photo ID at the polls.
- Oct.  
26

The last day to request an absentee ballot online or by mail by 5 p.m.
- Nov.  
8

**Election Day:** Polls are open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Absentee ballots must be returned or postmarked by Election Day. A valid photo ID is required.





# Bishops Issue Statement on Amendment 3 (Recreational Marijuana)

We, the Catholic Bishops of Missouri, issue this statement to express our concerns with Amendment 3, which would legalize the recreational use of marijuana in the state. We believe that marijuana legalization will negatively impact Missouri families, health outcomes, communities, and workers.

While some are focused on the increased state revenues that will be generated by a taxable marijuana industry, we are concerned with the social costs of increased marijuana usage. Although usage will be restricted to age 21 and older, legalization sends the message that marijuana is safe and socially acceptable. Many states that have legalized marijuana have the highest teen usage rates. We know that regular marijuana use has been connected to respiratory problems; mental health issues (including increased anxiety and suicidal thoughts); and learning, memory, and attention loss.

We are also concerned with how legalization could impact the state's workforce. In addition to impacting worker productivity

and safety, increased marijuana use could hinder individuals' ability to find or keep meaningful employment, especially in jobs that require drug testing.

Pope Francis has said that reducing drug addiction "will not be achieved by the liberalization of drug use." Instead, we must address those underlying social and economic issues that can lead to substance abuse. For these reasons, we urge Catholics and all persons of good will to oppose Amendment 3.

## CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF MISSOURI



+ *Mitchell T. Rozanski*

Most Reverend Mitchell T. Rozanski  
General Chairman  
Archbishop of St. Louis



+ *James V. Johnston, Jr.*

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.  
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+ *Shawn McKnight*

Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight  
Executive Chairman  
Bishop of Jefferson City



+ *Edward M. Rice*

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice  
Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

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## Questions to Ask Candidates

The following are suggested questions to ask candidates to determine their position on issues of importance to voters. These questions address legislation that the Missouri Catholic Conference supports as part of the MCC's public policy priorities:

- **Protecting Human Life:** Do you support/oppose enhancing support for new mothers and children? Do you support/oppose maintaining bans on abortion?
- **Death Penalty Repeal:** Do you support/oppose a trial judge being required to give a life sentence if the jury cannot unanimously decide on the death penalty in a capital murder case?
- **Criminal Justice Reform:** Do you support/oppose parole for non-violent offenders over 65 years of age who have served at least 30 years for their crime and have a good prison record?
- **Immigration:** Do you support/oppose comprehensive reforms that offer a path to citizenship for the undocumented who live in the U.S. and do not have a criminal record, expand family reunification, secure our borders, and establish humane border enforcement?
- **Education:** Do you support/oppose legislation that would expand educational choices for families?

# MCC Annual Assembly Goes Virtual (Again!)

## New Podcast Series Available



MCC FROM THE  
*CAPITOL*



*Scan here to listen*

The 2022 Annual Assembly will once again be held in a virtual format, featuring opening remarks from Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski. Keep an ear out for the newest series from MCC from the Capitol; we invite you to tune in to this year's episodes to hear even more engaging conversations about important topics. Visit our website at [mocatholic.org](https://mocatholic.org) or scan the QR code to listen to new (or old) podcast episodes!

### Annual Assembly | Podcast Episodes:

**Faithful Citizenship:** Bishop Shawn McKnight (Diocese of Jefferson City) discusses how Catholics can form their consciences in order to answer the Church's call to faithful citizenship.

**Consistent Life Ethic:** Aimee Murphy, a Catholic, describes why she created Rehumanize International, a nonpartisan, secular organization dedicated to bringing an end to all aggressive violence against humans.

**Immigration and The Church:** Marie Kenyon, attorney and director of the Peace and Justice Commission for the Archdiocese of St. Louis, details her experience at the border and explains how Catholics are called to support immigrants and the law.

**History of Catholic Education:** Mike Hoey, former director of the Missouri Catholic Conference, explains the history of the Blaine Amendment in Missouri and how its anti-Catholic language kick-started the MCC's role in defending Catholic education at the capitol.

**Biodiesel's Impact on Climate Change:** Donnell Rehagen, CEO of Clean Fuels Alliance America, headquartered in Jefferson City, discusses the impact biodiesel fuel has on the environment, public health, and the state of Missouri.

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Many thanks, MO K of C!

