



# FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

## For Iowa Catholics – 2020

Each election cycle has unique characteristics, and this one is no exception. This time it seems to be distinguished by threats:

**The threat of the coronavirus pandemic:** Many of us live in fear for our lives and our livelihood because of the threat of COVID-19. We need elected leaders who will act out of concern for public health, including by their example of practicing the safety precautions, in order to ensure the safety of the workforce and students in schools.

*“Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer”*

Romans 12:12

**The threat to life:** There are forces that threaten the unborn with abortion, or prisoners with the death penalty, or the aged and terminally ill with physician assisted suicide. We need elected officials who will be guided by science to recognize as a human person the child in the womb, the aged person in a sick bed, and all others, respecting the sacredness and dignity of all human life.

*Participation is a right and a moral obligation.*

**The threat to human rights and to the common good:** There are threats of people being denied their rights, as well as their access to benefits and to protection, simply because of their gender, color, country of origin, religion, or... whatever. We need elected officials who will enact laws that dismantle institutional racism.

**The threat to immigrants:** DACA recipients live in fear of deportation from the only home they have ever known. Their parents and others live in the same fear, and having to return to the threat of gang violence, and oppressive governments, or poverty. We need elected officials who will stop talking and start acting to reform our broken, outdated immigration system, in order to accommodate these family-oriented, God-fearing, Church-going people, who came here for work to feed, clothe and house their families.

**Finally, there is the threat to our democratic process** from those who are eligible to vote, and able to vote, but who don't exercise that right and duty, or don't exercise it conscientiously. We won't tell you who to vote for, but we will tell you to vote.



*Most Rev. Michael Jackels, Archbishop of Dubuque*

*Most Rev. R. Walker Nickless, Bishop of Sioux City*

*Most Rev. Thomas Zinkula, Bishop of Davenport*

*Most Rev. William Joensen, Bishop of Des Moines*

IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

*“Conscience is not something that allows us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere ‘feeling’ about what we should or should not do. Rather, conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart, revealing the truth to us and calling us to what is good while shunning what is evil.”*

~ Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE - The public policy voice of the bishops of Iowa.

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# A PROPERLY-FORMED CONSCIENCE

The bishops' role in politics is to help members of the community to form his or her conscience. In forming our conscience, we should:

- Approach any decision to be made with an openness to the truth and what is right.
- Study Scripture and Church teaching on the subject.
- Examine the facts/background information from a variety of sources.
- Enter a time of prayerful discernment about God's will.
- Be courageous and act upon our convictions.

## Iowa Catholic Conference LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

*How do your local candidates react to these principles?*

### HUMAN LIFE AND DIGNITY

Human life should be protected from conception until natural death as a basic requirement of a just and moral society. It should be recognized that God created each person as male and female. Every person is entitled to basic human necessities, such as food, housing, clean water and air, education, health care, and productive work for fair wages.

#### ABORTION

The unborn have a right to be protected against the violence of abortion. (Legislative example: A state constitutional amendment to clarify that the Iowa Constitution does not grant a right to an abortion)

#### EDUCATION

Parents have the right to choose the kind of education best suited to the needs of their children. Public policy should assist parents in exercising that right. (Legislative example: Education Savings Accounts)

#### RACISM

Racism, both individual and systemic, is an evil which endures in our society and should be condemned. Policies should be promoted that will combat racism and its effects in our civic and social institutions. (Legislative example: Addressing racial profiling by law enforcement)

#### CARE OF CREATION

"... We live in a common home which God has entrusted to us ... It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us." (Laudato Si, #232, #160) (Legislative example: adequate funding for enforcement of environmental laws; support of energy efficiency programs)

#### ECONOMIC CONCERNS

Government should give the needs of the poor and vulnerable preferential consideration. (Legislative example: protection of food assistance programs; measures to increase the availability of affordable housing)

#### HEALTH CARE

Health care is a human right (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, #166) and essential to protecting human life and dignity, especially for those who may be vulnerable, such as the elderly, the poor, or those with disabilities. (Legislative example: support additional funding for mental health services; oppose additional work reporting requirements for Medicaid)

#### IMMIGRATION

Persons have the right to find opportunities in their homeland. While sovereign nations have the right to control their borders, the Church recognizes that persons have the right to migrate to support themselves and their families. The human dignity and human rights of undocumented migrants should be respected. (Legislative example: opposing additional local enforcement of federal immigration laws)

#### RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Government should recognize the First Amendment right of religious groups, including religious minorities, to practice their faith and still participate fully in public life. (Legislative example: support the Religious Freedom Restoration Act)

This material is intended to serve an educational purpose and is not intended to endorse or oppose any candidate or political party.

# HOW TO VOTE

Iowa's voting laws have changed. If you are registered to vote you will receive a document in the mail allowing you to request an absentee ballot. Follow all instructions carefully so your vote can be counted. You can also vote in person.

Visit the Iowa Secretary of State's website at [voterready.iowa.gov](http://voterready.iowa.gov) to:

- Make sure you are registered to vote
- Request an absentee ballot
- Find out your polling place

Ask your candidates where they stand on issues of concern. A list of candidates with contact information is available at [sos.iowa.gov](http://sos.iowa.gov).



## JOIN THE IOWA CATHOLIC CONFERENCE LEGISLATIVE NETWORK

You can keep updated on issues in Iowa by receiving newsletters and action alerts from the Iowa Catholic Conference. Sign up at [www.iowacatholicconference.org](http://www.iowacatholicconference.org).

## ENGAGING WITH CIVILITY

How can we best enter the political discussion? One thing that might help us build a “culture of encounter” with those we might disagree with is to practice civility. Because we have many Catholics all over the political spectrum, the Catholic Church is one of the institutions in the country that is well-positioned to bridge the gap of divisiveness.

To help with this, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has launched a “Civilize It” campaign. The purpose is to invite Catholics to model civility, love for neighbor, and respectful dialogue.

**There are three elements to the “Civilize It” campaign:**

**CIVILITY.** Recognize others' human dignity, treat others with respect.

**CLARITY.** Stand up for your convictions while seeking to understand others. Root my viewpoints in the gospel and a well-formed conscience.

**COMPASSION.** Presume other's best intentions and listen with empathy. Strive to understand

As Catholics, we should rather be criticized for too much charity than too little. The language we use is important.

