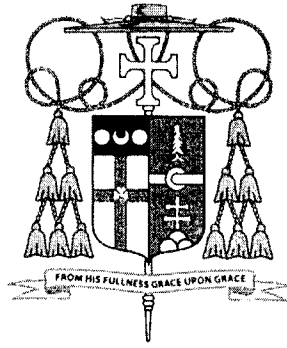


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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As Catholics, we are called to bring our faith and beliefs into the public square. Most often, we do this through the act of voting. A right that has been won and defended through the countless lives of our brothers and sisters, the freedom to vote is not just a privilege, but also a moral obligation that, if taken lightly, can have grave consequences.

This letter is not an endorsement of one candidate over another, or one party over the other. Rather, it is a reminder of our obligations as Catholics to vote with a “formed conscience.”

As Pope Francis said in *Rejoice and Be Glad* [*Gaudete et Exsultate*], “Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor.” The Holy Father adds that through this call to holiness, a “firm and passionate” defense of “the innocent unborn” is required. As are “the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”

As we enter the final weeks leading up to our elections in November, it is important to remember that we are called to vote in a manner that is consistent with Catholic teaching. In their statement on Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, the U.S. Catholic bishops urge Catholics to form their consciences through being open to truth, studying Scripture and Church teaching, examining facts and background information, and prayerful reflection. Our Holy Father and the body of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops also recently re-affirmed that abortion and euthanasia are the “preeminent” issues when determining how to vote. As voters, and especially as Catholic voters, we must always be mindful of the teachings of our Faith, especially the teachings about protecting the sacredness of human life at every stage.

To assist your reflection and preparation for Election Day, the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference has prepared state and federal voting guides. These guides report the voting records or positions of those running for public office on many key issues of concern to our Catholic faith.

I recognize that some of you reading this letter may feel that I am intruding on your freedom to choose those serving in public office. On the contrary, as your Bishop and chief teacher of the faith I am obligated in conscience before God to inform the Catholic faithful and all people of good will of the Church’s teachings and the moral obligations that flow from those truths. This is not a partisan appeal but a plea to recognize that every human person is made in the image and likeness of God, the Creator.

I pray you will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and reflect on the teachings of our Faith as you prepare to cast your vote this November. May God bless you and all those who continue to protect this most precious freedom.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Ronald W. Gainer