

# Modeling Faith through Voting

Greetings!

As the election draws closer, Catholics will continue to examine how they bring their faith to the public square. The election also can be viewed as an opportunity to discuss with our children how our vote reflects our beliefs. Communicating our decisions regarding voting is a way of passing on the faith.

When my brother was in preschool, my mom took him with her to vote. He had a strong opinion on who her candidate should be because this person had waved to him out of the car window as he drove through our neighborhood. My mother was morally opposed to some of the candidate's positions. When she voted for the other candidate, my brother stomped his foot and scowled at her for hours.

Often, contemporary discourse among adults is not too different from my brother's response. And, too, while some people angrily cite their opinions, others act indifferently to the political process. In teaching children how to bring their faith to the public square, we must avoid the pitfalls of incivility and apathy in both our words and our actions. Modeling is incredibly important. Children who hear parents dismiss an acquaintance because of their views are more prone to act likewise. Parents who act apathetically regarding their civic duties may be training their children correspondingly.

## We believe . . . all people have inherent dignity.

As we weigh the needs of our country and the imperfect human beings from whom we must choose, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers guidance through *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. The document directs Catholics to focus on the most vulnerable: unborn children, people living in poverty, those who have fled from violence and oppression, those who have disabilities or illnesses. As Catholics, we believe all people are made in the



Our lifestyle should make it possible to explain arriving at a choice in the context of a broader framework of following in the footsteps of Jesus.

image and likeness of God and all people have inherent dignity. We are called to vote for people who will protect the vulnerable.

In some ways, this intense focus on the powerless helps us talk to children about our choice. If we are living as we ought to be, voting will not be an isolated act of advocacy on behalf of those who are vulnerable. Our lifestyle should make it possible to explain arriving at a choice in the context of a broader framework of following in the footsteps of Jesus.

It cannot be expected that a candidate in the United States will advocate for all the same social programs as Jesus. No political system will have as its primary end perfect justice, peace, and love of God and neighbor. But we know that the destination of history is perfect peace, justice, and love. Our hope is in the kingdom, and our actions should aim at leading our society toward the common good. When we explain our judgments to the young people who are watching us, we help them learn how to form decisions in the future.