

PEACE AND JUSTICE



Article – 12

The following is an excerpt from: <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-title>

The permanent principles of the Church's social doctrine constitute the very heart of Catholic social teaching. These are the principles of: the dignity of the human person, . . . the common good; subsidiarity; and solidarity. These principles [are] the expression of the whole truth about man known by reason and faith . . ." (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 160)

40. In the words of Pope Francis, "progress in building a people in peace, justice and fraternity depends on four principles related to constant tensions present in every social reality. These derive from the pillars of the Church's social doctrine, which serve as 'primary and fundamental parameters of reference for interpreting and evaluating social phenomena'" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 221). Taken together, these principles provide a moral framework for Catholic engagement in advancing what we have called elsewhere a "consistent ethic of life" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 22). Rightly understood, this ethic does not treat all issues as morally equivalent nor does it reduce Catholic teaching to one or two issues. It anchors the Catholic commitment to defend human life, from conception until natural death, in the fundamental moral obligation to respect the dignity of every person as a child of God. It unites us as a "people of life and for life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 6) pledged to build what St. John Paul II called a "culture of life" (*Evangelium Vitae*, no. 77). This culture of life begins with the preeminent obligation to protect innocent life from direct attack and extends to defending life whenever it is threatened or diminished:

Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. . . . If we understand the human person as the "temple of the Holy Spirit"-the living house of God-then these issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. *All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house's foundation.* (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 22).⁴¹ Catholic voters should use the framework of Catholic social teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues affecting human life and dignity as well as issues of justice and peace, and they should consider candidates' integrity, philosophy, and performance. It is important for all citizens "to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest" (*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 33).

As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet if a candidate's position on a single issue promotes an intrinsically evil act, such as legal abortion, redefining marriage in a way that denies its essential meaning, or racist behavior, a voter may legitimately disqualify a candidate from receiving support.

In Christ,

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