

**CHRIST IN THE VOTING BOOTH:
Bringing a Catholic Conscience into Public Policy Decisions**

Our Lady of Grace Parish
Dr. William G. Batz
Secretary for Social Concerns of the Diocese of Pittsburgh
October 21, 2008

- The Church does not tell Catholics for whom or against to vote.
- Catholics are obliged to form their consciences in light of God's truth which is known through the Gospel, the teachings of the Church and the prudent use of reason.
- Using the light of reason, each person can perceive the *natural moral law* by which we know what to do or avoid.
- The moral teachings of the Church are rooted in human nature and the *natural moral law*. They do not actually require profession of Christian faith!
- Faith conveys truths about the dignity and sacredness of life, which are confirmed by the use of our human reason and the natural law.
- *The sacredness of human life and the dignity of every human person is the core of Catholic moral and social teaching.*
- The obligation to teach moral values that shape our lives, including public life and policy-making, is central to the Church's vocation to evangelize the world.

Conscience & Decision-Making

- Catholics have a moral obligation to participate in political life.
- Catholics have an obligation as disciples to be guided by moral convictions more than by party affiliation or personal interests. We are obliged to bring a moral conscience into the public arena.
- “Conscience” is not something that allows us to justify whatever we “feel” we should do.
- Conscience is a judgment of reason in which a person recognizes the moral quality of an action or policy, after informing ourselves in the light of the natural law and the teachings of our faith. It is a rational act of discerning choices involving what is good or evil, just or unjust.
- The consistent ethic of life is the principal benchmark for moral decision-making.
- A well-formed conscience recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight. It is often necessary to distinguish among issues of greater or lesser moral urgency.
- Intrinsically evil acts have a special claim on our consciences.
- A Catholic cannot support candidates who promote intrinsic moral evils, i.e., actions of policies that destroy, threaten or diminish life, *in order to support those policies*.
- A Catholic who rejects a candidate’s unacceptable position may still decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons.
- When all candidates hold positions in favor of an intrinsic evil, a Catholic may decide to vote for the candidate less likely to advance such a position, or a candidate who is more likely to pursue other good policies.