



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

August 28, 2024

Memorial of Saint Augustine, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

“Long ago I gave these commands to my people: ‘You must see that justice is done and must show kindness and mercy to one another. Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners who live among you, or anyone else in need.’”

- Zechariah 7:9

Called to Be Witnesses of Christ in a Time of Division

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit

As we approach another season of political campaigning, we find ourselves amidst a cacophony of voices, each striving to capture our attention and loyalty. The airwaves, social media, and public discourse are filled with messages that often appeal to our fears, prejudices, and divisions. In this charged atmosphere, it is easy to forget the higher calling to which we, as followers of Christ, are committed.

The social teaching of the Catholic Church offers us a timeless guide, rooted in the Gospel, for how we might navigate these turbulent times with grace, wisdom, and faith. It reminds us that our engagement in the public square must be shaped by our Christian values and by our unwavering commitment to justice, peace, and the dignity of every human being.

1. The Dignity of the Human Person

At the heart of Catholic social teaching is the belief in the inherent dignity of every human person. This conviction must inform all our actions, including how we engage in political discourse. We are called to resist the temptation to dehumanize those with whom we disagree and instead to seek out the image of God in each person we encounter. In our words and actions, let us be witnesses to a love that transcends political divisions, recognizing that our true citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).

2. The Common Good

The pursuit of the common good is a fundamental principle that should guide our political engagement. We are called to look beyond narrow self-interest and to consider the well-being of all, especially the most vulnerable among us. In a time when political rhetoric often divides us into opposing camps, we must resist the urge to retreat into echo chambers that reinforce our biases. Instead, let us seek dialogue and collaboration, working together to build a society that reflects the values of justice, compassion, and mutual respect.

3. *Solidarity*

Our faith calls us to a deep sense of solidarity with all people, recognizing that we are all members of one human family. This solidarity must extend to those who are marginalized, oppressed, or forgotten by society. As we engage in the political process, let us remember that our actions should be motivated not by partisan loyalty, but by a desire to lift up those who are most in need. In doing so, we fulfill Christ's command to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31).

4. *Option for the Poor*

The preferential option for the poor is a call to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable in our society. As Christians, we are challenged to advocate for policies that promote social justice, economic fairness, and the protection of human rights. In our political decisions, let us be guided by a concern for those who are most often ignored or exploited by systems of power.


5. *Peace and Reconciliation*

Finally, we are called to be peacemakers in a world that often glorifies conflict and division. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught us that blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God (Matthew 5:9). As we navigate this election season, let us be voices of reason and reconciliation, striving to build bridges rather than walls, and seeking to heal the wounds of division in our communities and our nation.

Dear friends, as we engage in the political process, let us do so with a spirit of prayer and discernment, asking the Holy Spirit to guide our hearts and minds. Let us remember that our ultimate allegiance is to Christ, and that our political engagement must always reflect the values of the Gospel.

May the Lord bless you and keep you in His peace during this time and may we all be strengthened in our commitment to live out our faith in the public square.

Yours in Christ,


Most Rev. George R. Lucey
Presiding Bishop