



CAN HOMILY NOTES

The Role of the Church in the Public Square

(Can also be used as bulletin reflections throughout the year)

- A. The Church and the state are two separate, distinct entities. “The Church...is not to be confused in any way with the political community” (*Catechism*, 2245). The Church “cannot and must not replace the state” (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28a). Neither is it the Church’s role to “impose” Catholic doctrine on non-Catholics through the political process.
- B. The Church, however, does have an important contribution to make to the state. The Church works to remind those in power to use their authority to serve the poor and vulnerable, build up the common good, and respect human life and dignity (*Catechism*, 1902-1903).
- C. Government exists to organize public life justly. Faith helps form consciences to recognize what is just, good, and true. It then emboldens us to uphold what is just, good, and true in the law. This is where faith and reason meet (*Deus Caritas Est*, 28a).
- D. The Church has the responsibility to care for the well-being and respect the rights of all people—especially families, the poor, and the vulnerable. So when public policies impact the good of families, the poor, the vulnerable, or basic human rights, the Church has a responsibility to pass moral judgments on them (*Catechism*, 2246).
- E. Through responsible participation in political life, the Church not only serves the temporal, but also the spiritual, needs of her people. Policies and laws can exploit the dignity of the human person if they are not founded on truth. The Church has a “mission of truth to accomplish, in every time and circumstance, for a society that is attuned to man, to his dignity, to his vocation...Fidelity to man requires fidelity to the truth, which alone is the *guarantee of freedom* and of *the possibility of integral human development* (*Caritas in Veritate*, 9).”
- F. “Our nation’s tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups and people of faith bring their convictions and concerns into public life (*Faithful Citizenship*, 11).”
- G. The Church’s efforts in the public square, while illuminated by faith, are ultimately based on reason and natural law, which recognizes universal truths. Natural law is respected throughout faiths and cultures as “a rule that binds men among themselves and imposes on them...common principles (*Catechism*, 1956).”

The Role of the Individual in the Public Square

(Can also be used as bulletin reflections throughout the year)

- H. The direct duty to build a just society through the political process belongs to the laity, not the institutional Church (*Deus Caritas Est*, 29).
- I. “It is necessary that all participate, each according to his position and role, in promoting the common good. This obligation is inherent in the dignity of the human person (*Catechism*, 1913).”

- J. “As far as possible citizens should take an active role in political life.” Citizens have the right, and at times the duty, to speak up on policy issues that impact human dignity and the common good (*Catechism*, 1915 and 2238).
- K. “In the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation. This obligation is rooted in our baptismal commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to bear Christian witness in all we do (*Faithful Citizenship*, 13).”
- L. To love is to desire the good of another person and work to achieve it. Love takes on a social dimension when it desires the common good of all people. Working for the common good throughout society—including in public policy—can be called an “institutional” or “political” path of charity that is “no less excellent” than other forms of charity (*Caritas in Veritate*, 7).
- M. Participation in public life and public policy allow us to open up every corner of our lives to Christ. “Any tendency to treat religion as a private matter must be resisted. Only when their faith permeates every aspect of their lives do Christians become truly open to the transforming power of the Gospel (Pope Benedict, Address to U.S. Bishops, 2008).”

Prayers of the Faithful

From the U.S. Bishops’ Faithful Citizenship materials. May be used throughout the year.

For the people of the United States, that we may be united in building a society in which everyone can have the opportunity to live with dignity and hope, we pray to the Lord...

For the Church, that we may be a witness to Christ’s love by practicing charity and promoting justice and peace throughout the world, we pray to the Lord...

For the members of this community, that we may find ways to help build a world of greater respect for human life and human dignity, we pray to the Lord...

For those who serve in elected office, that they may lead with courage and wisdom, reflecting the Church’s teaching that the moral test of our society is how the weak, the poor, and the vulnerable are faring, we pray to the Lord...