



Being Faithful Catholics and Citizens in our Commonwealth

September 2019

Election Day is November 5. Voters will elect members to all 140 seats in the Virginia General Assembly – 40 in the Senate and 100 in the House of Delegates. To be good Catholics and good Virginians, we must – with consciences well formed through prayer and the Church’s teachings – participate in these important decisions. As you prepare to vote, we offer these thoughts on weighing vital issues at stake, drawing from *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, a statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (www.faithfulcitizenship.org) which describes how we make good moral choices as we respond to our baptismal call to promote the common good.

Many issues are important. “Every human being has a right to life, the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible, and a right to access to those things required for human decency – food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing, freedom of religion and family life” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 49). We must be attentive and engaged whenever human dignity is at stake for any of our brothers and sisters in the human family – whether they are born or unborn, rich or poor, a newcomer or of U.S. origin. This attentiveness and engagement includes addressing the frequency and severity of gun violence in Virginia and across the country.

Not all issues have equal moral weight. Some actions, such as abortion and euthanasia, are “intrinsically evil” – that is, “always incompatible with love of God and neighbor” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 22). “[T]he moral obligation to oppose policies promoting intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions” (no. 37).

Protecting life is paramount. The right to life is “the fundamental right that makes all other rights possible” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 49). Our priority must be to protect life to the fullest extent possible.

For more on voting decisions, we encourage you to read paragraphs 34-37 of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (www.faithfulcitizenship.org). For more on state issues, see the Virginia Catholic Conference’s “Faithful Citizenship in Virginia” bulletin insert (www.vacatholic.org).

Please vote on November 5 with a well formed conscience as a faithful Catholic and as a citizen of our Commonwealth.

Faithfully Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Michael F. Burbidge
Bishop of Arlington

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond