



THE ISSUES, THE CANDIDATES, AND YOUR VOTE 2020

This year, Michigan voters have the privilege and freedom to participate in the greatest exercise of democracy by voting for candidates who have come forward to serve their communities. Tuesday, November 3, 2020 is Election Day, where the following offices—from the local township hall to the president of the country—will be decided:

- **Federal:** President of the United States of America, one of two Michigan U.S. Senate seats, and all fourteen U.S. Representatives in Michigan's Congressional Delegation.
- **State:** Two justices for the Michigan Supreme Court, two members of the State Board of Education, and all 110 State Representatives.
- **Local:** Probate judges, county commissioners, and various other local, township, and municipal officials. In many areas, Michiganders will also weigh in on critical ballot issues that impact services and policies within their local communities.

By Election Day, most Americans will likely have become exhausted by candidates, commentators, and political operatives who promote partisanship, division, fear, and name-calling. While running a campaign should be an opportunity for candidates to share their talents and abilities, past elections have led many to disengage from the political process, even though elected officials will have a significant impact on local neighborhoods, schools, and services.

In the days and weeks leading up to the election, Michigan Catholics have the responsibility to consider how they can best serve their communities through election choices and contribute to a climate of civility in the face of divisiveness and disagreement. In fact, Catholics can play a large role in returning civility and respect to the political process.

During the election, and perhaps just as importantly in their daily lives, Catholics are reminded to allow their faith to guide their politics. The principles of faith that govern one's daily life should also guide political viewpoints, and when necessary, "transform the political party...to which [he or she] belongs."¹ Rather than considering what a certain party would do, Catholics have the opportunity to ask:

- What does God want me to do?
- How will my voting choice help to promote the common good and protect human dignity?
- How can I speak up about the issues that matter in a respectful way?

This **focus** publication will examine the role of conscience formation and civility in the 2020 Election and provide questions and thoughts for consideration before Michiganders cast their ballot. It also offers insights from the lives of several Catholic saints, whose examples in public life teach the importance of courage, faith, and a love for others. •

ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE VOTING

Catholics are called to consider a wide range of issues important to the common good before voting, weighing each according to its moral importance. During this process, it is beneficial to research the ballot ahead of time, gathering the facts for every question or candidate. The paragraphs below offer information about Catholic teaching, questions to assist voters in evaluating candidate positions or political party platforms, and a list of relevant saints from whom believers can learn before casting their ballot.² Consider using these tools for prayer and reflection during the conscience formation process.

Human Life and Dignity

From the moment an individual is conceived until his or her natural death, that person possesses dignity as a human being made in the image and likeness of God. Together with the frail and elderly, the handicapped and marginalized, the dignity of all human life must be protected, beginning with the unborn child in the womb. Rampant gun violence, maltreatment of the sick and disabled, and the loss of over 60 million children due to legalized abortion illustrate the need for a more just and violence-free society.

- Will the candidate support policies that provide women in difficult pregnancies with pre- and post-natal care, transportation and employment assistance, and other necessary care to help her through and after the pregnancy?
- Will the candidate oppose direct threats to human life, such as abortion, racism, assisted suicide, euthanasia, the death penalty, embryonic stem cell research, and violence?

St. Gianna Beretta Molla—an Italian physician—is the patron saint of unborn children. During her fourth pregnancy, St. Gianna chose not to undergo a procedure for her health that would have resulted in the death of her unborn child. She delivered a healthy baby but died from postoperative complications. Her bold decision to put another life before her own is an example of extraordinary and courageous action to protect human dignity. **Other examples:** St. Elizabeth, St. Gerard Majella, St. John Paul II, St. Joseph, and St. Katharine Drexel.

Religious Liberty

The constitutional freedoms that permit Americans to practice their faith freely and prohibit the government from intruding in religious life are among the foremost principles of the American experiment. This election season reminds us that these sacred principles are no longer paramount to some in the political and civil arena. Elected officials are thus urged to re-invigorate religious liberty for all, thereby promoting peace, understanding, and service to others in the public square.

- Does the candidate support the right of religious individuals and institutions, such as hospitals, charity agencies, and schools, to operate according to their deeply held beliefs?
- Does the candidate oppose restrictions on refugee acceptance and resettlement on the basis of religion?

St. Thomas More is the patron saint of lawyers, statesmen, and politicians. St. Thomas More served in a variety of public roles, including as Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII. He refused to acknowledge the king's divorce or recognize the king as the head of the Church, which led to