



The Challenge Of Faithful Citizenship

Question #4 from the Catholic Bishops statement entitled Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility, follows for your thoughtful consideration.

- 4. How can our nation help parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, a sense of hope, and a n ethic of stewardship and responsibility? How can our society defend the central institution of marriage and better support families in their moral responsibilities?**

Once again, in contrast to previous questions, this seems to be directed toward our nation and our society, where our economic, political, cultural, and religious diversities hopelessly complicate these already massive issues on a day-to-day basis. Further roiling the waters is the nature of a political campaign in an election year when candidates promise only good things to all segments of society and imply that the opposite party will bring the country to ruin. How do we, as Catholics, sift through all of these promises? Do we honestly think that God should be put in this political arena as siding with Democrats or Republicans? What is our obligation as Catholics? How do we as American Catholics, living in a society that honors and respects separation of church and state, respond to law and rules that seem to contradict or call into question what we have been taught as Catholics? Where to turn?

Do we respond as stated in the Declaration of Religious Freedom from Vatican II which says: **“In all activity a human is bound to follow conscience faithfully. A person is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to (her or) his conscience.”** Does this enable us to hear clearly the words of Pope Paul VI who spoke authoritatively to us as Catholics in *Octogesima/Adviens, 1971*, when he said, **“It belongs to the laity without waiting passively for orders and directives to take the initiative freely and to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structure of the community in which they live.”**

Author Marianne Williamson writes: **“It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.”**

How do we respond?

--St. Bede Justice & Peace Ministry

For the complete text of the Bishops’ statement, go to www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship