



DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

**GUIDE
to
ADVOCACY**

AN INVITATION TO SHARE IN THE POLITICAL LIFE

Pope John Paul II reminds us that, as citizens, we have not only the right but the duty to “share in the political life.” I come to you with an invitation to exercise that right, and to more fully embrace that duty, by advocating with and for the poor and vulnerable among us.

The Catholic community brings to public life the insights of the Scriptures and Catholic teaching, broad experience in serving those in need, and a large diverse community. Armed with Gospel values and Church teaching, we advocate for the just and compassionate resolution of public-policy issues that affect all of us and virtually all aspects of family and community life, issues involving human rights, social justice and the life of the Church in society.

Please join in this calling to live out our faith and to share in the political life of our community.

**Most Reverend Michael A. Saltarelli
Bishop of Wilmington**



FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP

The Bishops of the United States in their statement *Faithful Citizenship: Civic Responsibility for a New Millennium* remind us:

“In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. Every believer is called to faithful citizenship, to become an informed, active, and responsible participant in the political process.....The Catholic approach to faithful citizenship begins with moral principles, not party platforms. The directions for our public witness are found in Scripture and Catholic social teaching.”

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Life and Dignity of the Human Person

Every human person is created in the image and likeness of God. The conviction that human life is sacred and that each person has inherent dignity that must be respected in society lies at the heart of Catholic social teaching. Calls to advance human rights are illusions if the right to life itself is subject to attack. We believe that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death; that people are more important than things; and that the measure of every institution is whether or not it enhances the life and dignity of the human person.

Call to Family, Community, and Participation

The human person is not only sacred but inherently social. The God-given institutions of marriage and the family are central and serve as the foundations for social life. They must be supported and strengthened, not undermined. Beyond the family, every person has a right to participate in the wider society and a corresponding duty to work for the advancement of the common good and the well-being of all, especially the poor and weak.

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - Continued

Rights and Responsibilities

As social beings, our relationships are governed by a web of rights and corresponding duties. Every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things that allow them to live a decent life—faith and family, food and shelter, health care and housing, education and employment. In society as a whole, those who exercise authority have a duty to respect the fundamental human rights of all persons. Likewise, all citizens have a duty to respect human rights and to fulfill their responsibilities to their families, to each other, and to the larger society.

Option for the Poor and Vulnerable

Scripture teaches that God has a special concern for the poor and vulnerable. The prophets denounced injustice toward the poor as a lack of fidelity to the God of Israel. Jesus, who identified himself with the least of these, came to preach the good news to the poor and told us, "Give to him who asks of you, do not refuse one who would borrow from you." The Church calls on all of us to embrace this preferential love of the poor and vulnerable, to embody it in our lives, and to work to have it shape public policies and priorities.

Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers

The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's act of creation. Work is a way of fulfilling part of our human potential given to us by God. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers, owners, and managers must be respected—the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to economic initiative, and to ownership and private property.

Solidarity

Because of the interdependence among all the members of the human family around the globe, we have a moral responsibility to commit ourselves to the common good at all levels: in local communities, in our nation, in the community of nations. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. As Pope John Paul II has said, "We are all really responsible for all."

PRINCIPLES OF CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING - continued

Care for God's Creation

The world that God created has been entrusted to us, yet our use of it must be directed by God's plan for creation, not simply by our own benefit. Our stewardship of the earth is a kind of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by our concern for the welfare of others, both around the world and for generations to come, and by a respect for the intrinsic worth and beauty of all God's creatures.

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?

Advocacy is using our voices and votes to speak for the voiceless, the poor, the vulnerable in our society and to advance the common good. We are called to shape a constituency of conscience, measuring every policy by how it touches the least, the lost and the left out among us.

HOW IS THE DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON INVOLVED IN ADVOCACY?

The Diocese of Wilmington sets its public policy agenda through the Bishop of Wilmington and the Diocesan Public Policy Committee.

The Diocese has a multi-faceted approach to promoting its public policy agenda. In addition to a Diocesan lobbyist who serves in Dover Delaware, the Diocese also is a member of the Maryland Catholic Conference which addresses issues in Maryland. Additionally there are grassroots legislative networks (see next page) that deal with federal issues, social justice issues, pro-life issues and education related issues.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Our public officials shape public policy – we elect them to do so. It is our responsibility to let them know what issues are important to us. We can do this in a number of ways:

- **Participate in Diocesan Legislative Networks**
You can learn about the issues and get legislative briefings on the following issues:
 - ✓ Social Justice issues – contact Parish Social Ministry at 302-655-9624 to join the *VOICES for Justice* Advocacy Network.
 - ✓ Pro-Life Issues – contact Family Life Bureau at 302-655-9624 to join the *Respect Life Committee*.
 - ✓ Education related issues – contact Office for Catholic Schools at 302-573-3133 to join the *Delaware Alliance of Catholic School Parents*.
 - ✓ State of Maryland issues – contact The Maryland Catholic Conference at 410-269-1155.
- **Participate in the Annual Maryland Lobby Night**
Join with hundreds of Marylanders on President's Day in Annapolis. Receive briefings on key issues and visit your state legislators.
- **Make Personal Visits to Legislators**
Face-to-face visits are very effective. This is a perfect opportunity to express your position on an issue and to learn your legislator's position. Providing additional input to the legislator and/or their staff members can be helpful in getting your position endorsed.
- **Write a Personal Letter**
Every letter you write is extremely important. A letter is an effective way to articulate your position on an issue. Many legislators believe that one letter can represent the sentiments of at least 100 constituents!
- **Make a Telephone Call**
A phone call is an extremely effective way to express your position or viewpoint when a vote or legislative action is imminent.
- **Send a Fax or E-mail**
Faxes and e-mails are not considered as effective as personal visits, letters or phone calls. However, a fax or e-mail can be effective in certain situations. (see page 7)

GENERAL TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE ADVOCACY

Whether visiting, writing or calling elected officials, there are some basic guidelines to follow:

- **Identify yourself:** If you are a voter in the legislator's district, say so.
- **Be specific:** State the Issue clearly if possible, refer to a bill number (House Bill # or Senate Bill #) and the bill's title.
- **Be Timely:** Try to respond as quickly as possible to legislative alerts. Contact your legislators before they vote on an issue.
- **Be Personal:** Let your legislator know why you support or oppose a bill. Tell him or her how the bill will affect you, your family, the poor in your community.
- **Don't be intimidated!** Elected officials represent you. They are anxious to hear from their constituents and welcome the opportunity to hear your position on issues.
- **Prepare - but don't be overwhelmed!** It is not necessary that you know every detail about an issue. Understand the basic points that you want to communicate to your legislator. Resources are available from the various the Diocesan legislative networks and from other national organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Charities USA, and Catholic Relief Services.
- **Ask for a response!** Ask for the legislator's current position on an issue. If undecided, offer to provide additional information in support of your position. If he / she is opposed to your position, ask what additional input might help to change his / her mind.
- **Express your appreciation!** Thank your legislator for listening to your view on an issue, for his / her support, and for their time.
- **Be Persistent and Patient!** The political process requires persistence and patience. Things will not change immediately, but significant change has been made through grassroots advocacy efforts. Get others involved – this will help legislators know that an issue is important to a larger group of constituents.

LOBBYING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Personal Visit

A face-to-face visit is the most effective way to communicate with legislators. Personal contact provides the best opportunity to clearly explain your position on an issue. Positive encounters with constituents are very important to legislators looking ahead to reelection. To help your visit go smoothly:

- Make an appointment and be on time.
- Always be courteous, never argumentative.
- Make clear what your issue and position are and what you would like your legislator to do.
- Provide your legislator with a brief, written summary of your issue.
- Don't let your legislator evade the issue with small talk, politely get to the point as quickly as possible.
- Follow up the visit with a thank you note.

Letter

Every letter you write is extremely important. Many legislators believe that one letter represents the sentiments of at least 100 constituents. When writing to legislators remember to:

- Keep your letter brief. Write legibly or type.
- Give concrete examples of how you, your family, the poor in your community are affected by a particular issue.
- Include your address and request a response.

Telephone – Fax – E-mail

Prior to a committee vote of a Senate or House floor vote, communicating by telephone, fax or e-mail can be effective in influencing a legislator's vote. When you contact your legislator (if by phone you most likely will speak with and aide) be sure to:

- Provide your name and address.
- Provide the name and bill number of the legislation. Clearly state your position.
- Ask how your legislator expects to vote on the issue.

“It is in keeping with their dignity as persons that human beings should take an active part in government...In this situation, those who administer the government come into frequent contact with the citizens, and it is thus easier for them to learn what is really needed for the common good.”

- Pope John XXIII
Pacem in Terris



DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON
WWW.CDOW.ORG