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Election 2004

“Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s”. (Lk 20:25)

To all the clergy, seminarians and faithful of the Diocese of Arizona: peace, joy and our apostolic blessing.

This Tuesday, Americans will cast their votes in national, state and local elections. The issues America faces are complex and the results of this election will have far reaching effects, not only nationally but also internationally. As we consider the candidates and ponder the issues before us, I urge you to do so in a prayerful, deliberate manner, recognizing that what we decide this week will continue to have consequences long after the election is over.

As Catholic Christians, we are heir to decades of social teaching that can serve as a guide for the decisions we are called to make. In an effort to clarify that teaching, I am attaching a document that outlines some of the basic social justice principles that I would ask you to keep in mind as you go to the polls. I am deeply grateful to the Catholic Action Network for Social Justice and Call to Action for permission to share this information from their 2004 Voter Guide.

It is the civic duty of every citizen to participate in the electoral process with an informed conscience. Please consider these principles and allow them to guide you as you make your decisions on the candidates and issues. When you are unclear about your decisions, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit who is always ready and willing to help us work for truth and justice. Whichever candidate you support or whatever your position on any of the issues we now face, I urge you to vote and make your voice heard. The strength of a representative democracy is measured by the involvement of the electorate, not only during the elections but afterwards as well. Stay involved, monitor the actions of your elected officials and measure them against the principles of social justice outlined in the attachment.

May peace and justice prevail. May the Holy Spirit guide us all this coming week as well as in the months and years ahead. May Her wisdom be ours.

With appreciation for your attention to this letter, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

**+Mark Elliott Newman, OC
Bishop—Diocese of Arizona**

Catholic Social Teaching Principles

- **Work and the Rights of Workers**

The economy exists to serve people, not the other way around. People have a right to productive work and fair wages. Workers have the right to safe working conditions, the right to participate in decisions that affect them in the workplace, and the right to security in the case of sickness, disability, unemployment or old age. All workers have the right to form unions. In fact, unions are referred to in the teaching as an “indispensable” element in the search for social justice.

- **Dignity of the Human Person**

All people are sacred, made in the image and likeness of God. People do not lose dignity because of disability, poverty, age, lack of success, or race. This emphasizes people over things, being over having. This principle promotes respect for all human life.

- **Rights and Responsibilities**

People have a fundamental right to life, food, shelter, health care, education and employment. All people have a right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities. For example, all persons have a duty to respect the rights of others in society. All persons have a responsibility to participate in social and political activities and institutions that promote the common good.

- **Promotion of Peace and Disarmament**

Catholic teaching understands peace as a positive, action-oriented concept. Peace is not just the absence of war. It involves mutual respect and collaboration between peoples and nations. There is a close relationship between peace and justice. Peace is the fruit of justice and is dependent upon right order among human beings and human institutions.

- **Preferential Option for the Poor**

The moral test of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable members. The poor have the most urgent moral claim on the conscience of the nation. We are called to look at public policy decisions in terms of how they affect the poor. The “option for the poor” is not an adversarial slogan that pits one group or class against another, rather it states that the deprivation and powerlessness of the poor is a wound to the whole community.

- **Stewardship of God’s Creation**

The goods of the earth are gifts from God, and they are intended by God for the benefit of everyone. There is a “social mortgage” that guides our use of the world’s goods, and we have a responsibility to care for these goods as stewards and trustees, not as mere consumers and users. How we treat the environment is a measure of our stewardship, and a sign of our respect for the Creator.

- **Global Solidarity and Development**

We are one human family. Our responsibilities to each other cross national, racial, economic and ideological differences. We are called to work globally for justice. Authentic development must avoid the extremism of underdevelopment on the one hand, and “superdevelopment” on the other. Accumulating material goods, and technical resources will be unsatisfactory and debasing if there is no respect for the moral, cultural and spiritual dimensions of the human person.

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