

The Churches of The Guardian Angels and Saint Nicholas

215 Second Street West, Chaska, MN 55318 • www.gachaska.org • (952) 227-4000

412 Fourth Street West, Carver, MN 55315 • www.stnicholascarver.org • (952) 448-2345

Office Hours

Monday: 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Tuesday: 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Thursday: 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

Friday: 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

Guardian Angels Staff

Parish Office Front Desk:

info@gachaska.org
952-227-4000

Father Tony VanderLoop, Pastor:

frtonyvanderloop@gachaska.org
(952) 679-9415

Deacon John Cleveland:

jcleveland@gachaska.org

Deacon Bob Burns:

bburns@gachaska.org

Joel Swanson, Business Administrator/ Safe Environment Coordinator:

jswanson@gachaska.org
(952) 227-4001

Brittany Kaufmann, Director of Music and Liturgy:

bkaufmann@gachaska.org
(763) 355-6905

Viviana Sotro, Latino Ministry Coordinator:

vsotro@gachaska.org
(952) 227-4010

Bulletin: bulletin@gachaska.org

Prayer Chain: prayer@gachaska.org

Saint Nicholas Staff

Father Tony VanderLoop, Pastor:

frtonyvanderloop@gachaska.org
(952) 679-9415

Joel Swanson, Business Administrator/ Safe Environment Coordinator:

jswanson@gachaska.org
(952) 227-4001

Father Jim Devorak, Retired



25TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

“If anyone wishes to be first,
he shall be the last of all and
the servant of all.” Taking a
child, he placed it in their
midst, and putting his arms
around it, he said to them,
“Whoever receives one child
such as this in my name,
receives me.” - Mk 9:35b-37a

Excerpta from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCO. #848

September 22nd, 2024

Weekly Liturgy Schedule / Horario de Misas

Sunday Masses:

Saturday: 4:30 p.m.

Sunday: 8:00 a.m. & 10:00 a.m.

10:00 a.m. at Saint Nicholas

Sunday: 12:30 p.m. in Spanish

Daily Masses:

Tuesday: 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday: 8:00 a.m.

Thursday: 8:00 a.m.

Friday: 6:00 p.m.

bilingual at Saint Nicholas

Reconciliation:

Saturday: 8:00 -8:45 a.m.

Saturday: 3:15 -4:15 p.m.

Or by appointment

Eucharistic Adoration:

Thursday: 8:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

Misas dominicales:

Sábado: 4:30 p.m.

Domingo: 8:00 a.m. / 10:00 a.m.

Domingo: 12:30 p.m. en español

Misas diarias:

Martes: 5:30 p.m.

Miércoles: 8:00 a.m.

Jueves : 8:00 a.m.

Viernes: 6:00 p.m.

bilingüe en San Nicolás

Reconciliación:

Sábado: 8:00-8:45 a.m.

Sábado: 3:15-4:15 p.m.

Adoración Eucarística:

Jueves: 8:30 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

Grupo de Oración

Jueves: 7:00 p.m.—8:30 p.m.

Guardian Angels Lay Leadership Positions

Larry Schmid, Trustee: (612) 670-7655
David Pohlen, Trustee: (952) 428-9649
Steve Rasmussen, Facilities Council Chair: (612) 802-6442
Francis Kerber, Cemetery Board Chair: (952) 836-5467
Scott Guillemette, Finance Council Chair: (952) 227-4000
Bill Van Hecke, Pastoral Council Chair: (612) 812-8615

Saint Nicholas Lay Leadership Positions

Elaine Ess, Cemetery: (571) 315-4980
Darlene Mahowald, Prayer Chain/Funeral: (952) 448-4464
John Turek, Trustee, Finance/Property Chair: (952) 448-2345
Dan Svoboda, Trustee: (952) 448-2345
Prayer Garden: (952) 913-4964

BULLETIN SUBMITTALS

Please submit announcements, feature articles, or event summaries for the bulletin for Guardian Angels or St. Nicholas by email at bulletin@gachaska.org by 12 p.m. the Tuesday before. Photographs must be in .jpg format.

ENVÍOS AL BOLETÍN

Si tiene algo que enviar para el boletín de Guardian Angels o St. Nicholas, envíe un correo electrónico a bulletin@gachaska.org antes de las 12:00 p.m. el martes anterior. Fotografía debe estar en formato .jpg.

GET THE BULLETIN EMAILED DIRECTLY TO YOU!

Did you know that you can get this bulletin sent to your email inbox? You can! Call the Parish Office to get signed up.

RECIBE EL BOLETÍN POR CORREO ELECTRÓNICO ¡DIRECTAMENTE A USTED!

¿Sabías que puedes recibir este boletín en tu bandeja de entrada de correo electrónico? ¡Puedes! Llame a la oficina parroquial para registrarse.

ANOINTING

If you wish to receive an anointing please call the Parish Office: (952) 227-4000.

HOSPITAL, NURSING HOME, AND HOMEBOUND VISITS

Churches are no longer notified by hospitals or nursing homes when a parishioner is admitted unless the family has requested it. If you or a family member are homebound, hospitalized or in a nursing home and would like a visit from a member of the ministry staff, please call the Parish Office.

Church Calendar

Monday, September 23rd

Tuesday, September 24th

1:00 p.m. Our Lady of Fatima Special Early Evening Program, GA Church and St. Francis Hall

5:30 p.m. Mass, † Daniel and Mary Ann Klingelhutz

7:00 p.m. Adult Choir Rehearsal, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Wednesday, September 25th

8:00 a.m. Mass, † Flora Lano

6:30 p.m. Faith Formation, Campus-wide

Thursday, September 26th

8:00 a.m. Mass, † Florance Meyer

Friday, September 27th

6:00 p.m. Mass (SN)

Saturday, September 28th

8:00 a.m. Confessions, GA Church

12:00 p.m. Fall Festival Opens, South Parking Lot

3:15 p.m. Confessions, GA Church

4:30 p.m. Mass, † Vic & Cole Carlson

Sunday, September 29th

8:00 a.m. Mass, † Jim Reynolds

10:00 a.m. Mass, † Colette and Ervin Eissinger

10:00 a.m. Mass (SN), † Jim Reynolds

12:30 p.m. Mass (Spanish), Para la Gente

Mass Intentions:

Mass intentions may be for the living and/or the departed, with a † designating in the bulletin a deceased person. There is a \$10 suggested donation per Mass intention. Permission from the sick person or his/her family must be granted before a name's inclusion in these prayers. To schedule a Mass intention, please call the Parish Office.

Baptism:

Our Baptism Belonging Class is required for all parents as a first step to Baptism of your child. Please call Father Tony VanderLoop, Pastor, at 952-679-9415 to sign up for a class. We encourage Godparents to attend. Baptisms are scheduled once per month after the 10:00 a.m. Sunday Mass. Special dates requested for Baptism will be considered and accommodated depending on circumstances.

Matrimony:

Marriage preparation is required. Please call Father Tony VanderLoop, Pastor, at 952-679-9415 at least 8 months in advance.

Communion for the Homebound:

When we come together to pray at our Eucharistic liturgy, we do not forget the members of our community who are unable to be with us because of ill health. We remember them in our prayers, and we wish to include them in our Holy Communion. Members of our community bring the Blessed Sacrament to them to comfort them and to unite us in the Eucharist. We are not always aware of those who have this need. Please call the Parish Office to let us know if you or a member of your family would like to have Holy Communion brought to them. Then we can schedule a time for our ministers to visit and bring the Sacrament.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Sunday: Wis 2:12, 17-20/Ps 54:3-4, 5, 6-8 (6b)/Jas 3:16—4:3/ Mk 9:30-37
Monday: Prv 3:27-34/Ps 15:2-3a, 3bc-4ab, 5/Lk 8:16-18
Tuesday: Prv 21:1-6, 10-13/Ps 119:1, 27, 30, 34, 35, 44/Lk 8:19-21
Wednesday: Prv 30:5-9/Ps 119:29, 72, 89, 101, 104, 163/Lk 9:1-6
Thursday: Eccl 1:2-11/Ps 149:1b-2, 3-4, 5-6a and 9b/Lk 9:7-9
Friday: Eccl 3:1-11/Ps 144:1b and 2abc, 3-4/Lk 9:18-22
Saturday: Eccl 11:9—12:8/Ps 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14 and 17/Lk 9:43b-45
Next Sunday: Nm 11:25-29/Ps 19:8, 10, 12-13, 14 (9a)/Jas 5:1-6/Mk 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

LECTURAS DE LA SEMANA

Domingo: Sab 2, 12. 17-20/Sal 53, 3-4. 5. 6-8 (6)/Sant 3, 16—4, 3/Mc 9, 30-37
Lunes: Prov 3, 27-34/Sal 14, 2-3. 3-4. 5/Lc 8, 16-18
Martes: Prov 21, 1-6. 10-13/Sal 118, 1. 27. 30. 34. 35. 44/Lc 8, 19-21
Miércoles: Prov 30, 5-9/Sal 118, 29. 72. 89. 101. 104. 163/Lc 9, 1-6
Jueves: Ecl 1, 2-11/Sal 149, 1-2. 3-4. 5-6 y 9/Lc 9, 7-9
Viernes: Ecl 3, 1-11/Sal 143, 1 y 2. 3-4/Lc 9, 18-22
Sábado: Ecl 11, 9—12, 8/Sal 89, 3-4. 5-6. 12-13. 14 y 17/Lc 9, 43-45
Domingo siguiente: Nm 11, 25-29/Sal 18, 8. 10. 12-13. 14 (9)/ Sant 5, 1-6/Mc 9, 38-43. 45. 47-48

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE



Today's second reading warns that a heart consumed with avarice and envy leads to jealousy, strife, conflicts, and disputes. A giving heart, in contrast, can sing instead with the psalmist, "Freely will I offer you sacrifice; I will praise your name, O Lord, for its goodness."

Maintenance Expenses Paid 7/1/23 to Date:

Friary Doors, Church Fence, Repair Sanctuary/Sacristy windows, replace furnace room windows, church boilers, Gym Lights

Year-To-Date 7/1/24—9/16/24

	Guardian Angels	St. Nicholas
Goal, Year-to-Date	\$149,379	\$14,484
Last Sunday's Collection	\$9,200	\$547
Total Giving YTD	\$116,710	\$13,160
Percent of Goal Funded	78%	91%

Guardian Angels Maintenance Fund:

Contributions this fiscal year:	\$12,976.03
Expenses this fiscal year:	\$22,228.50
Fund Balance:	\$108,875.50

Please remember the Church of the Guardian Angels or Saint Nicholas in your Will.



HOW SHOULD WE VOTE AS CATHOLICS?

Dear Parishioners and friends,

Voting is one of the most important responsibilities as citizens. It can be challenging sometimes, especially when it is a presidential election year and the lines are long. I remember one election day standing in line for an hour in the morning. I also remember another election day when I was younger arriving at the polling place at 8:05 p.m. hoping that they would let me in. No such luck. Voting is an intentional choice that requires responsibility. In fact, the church teaches that there are three primary responsibilities of all citizens: to pay taxes, to defend our country, and to vote.

When we do these things, we are putting the good of society and our fellow citizens above our individual desires and needs. A primary question that we must answer as Catholic voters is whether the needs of the weakest and most defenseless among us are being addressed. We can think of our scriptural teachings of the Old Testament that call for the defense and care for the “orphans and widows.” We must ask, Who are the orphans and widows of our time? I also think of the story of the Good Samaritan that forms our consciences and beliefs about how we need to welcome the stranger among us. And how about the Book of Deuteronomy which exhorts us to “choose life, therefore, and you will live.” Deut. 30:19.

Pope Saint John Paul II, affirms this choice for life in the sense of choosing life for our neighbor at all stages of life, including the unborn and the elderly. “The common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights – for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture – is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with the maximum determination.” (Pope St. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 38).

Indeed, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops say, in their bulletin insert on the Dignity of the Human Person, “The dignity of the human person is the foundation for a moral vision of society.” As we seek to imitate the Good Samaritan and become neighbor to all, we must work to protect the dignity of all, especially those who are most vulnerable.

I invite you, for today, to read the two bulletin inserts that are included here as part of a series of inserts of the USCCB’s initiative, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. I will reflect further on voting as Catholics in future bulletin articles.

Father Tony

NEW ALTAR SERVER TRAINING

If your child in 4th grade or over would like to start altar serving this fall, we would love to have them! We also encourage you to speak with children who haven’t mentioned it. Serving at the altar is a great way to enrich a young Catholic’s faith.

New servers need to come to TWO of the following training dates:

Wednesday, September 25th at 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, September 28th at 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday, October 9th at 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 26th at 10:00 a.m.

Please let us know if you are coming, or just drop by!

OUR MASS WILL BE OUTDOORS ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 5TH AT 4:30 P.M.

It will take place at the Saint Nicholas Prayer Garden together with Guardian Angels and Saint Nicholas parishioners.

Bring your own chair if you are able. Refreshments will be served after Mass.

Confessions will be at Guardian Angels 3:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

We will not have Mass at GA that day nor have Mass at St. Nicholas on Sunday, October 6th.

Come and get to know your neighbors! We look forward to the time together!



The Fall Festival, featuring the Daughters of Isabella General Store & Silent Auction is coming soon!

In the GENERAL STORE, we are in need of canned & baked goods and garden produce. We also need new or gently used items that will be sold at discount prices. Indicating the approximate value of the items you donate is greatly appreciated!



New & gently used items such as wine, glasses, and wine markers make up a fun wine themed basket. You can either make up your own basket or donate individual items and we will add your items to

those donated by others to create the basket.

GIFT CERTIFICATES are much-needed items that add great value and appeal to the baskets. Gift certificate ideas include clothing stores, liquor, Visa, sporting events, Spas & Massages, restaurants, and local attractions (Yellow Barn, Valleyfair).

ALL PROCEEDS GO TO GUARDIAN ANGELS.

Please bring your items, with their approximate value, to the Church office – the sooner the better! It takes a large amount of time to get this together. Last year we had over 100 baskets – something for everyone



If you have any questions, please call Barb Brose at (952)448-5057 or Colleen Tompkins at (612)741-7646.

SAVE THE DATE!



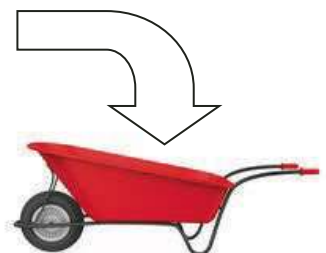
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28TH
12:00 – 8:00pm
Games, Music, Karaoke,
Food, and Fun

Roll-In Car Show
12:00 – 4:00pm



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCEMENT

The Guardian Angels School Alumni Association is once again collecting “the good stuff.” Please drop it off at the Parish Office.





WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

*A Weekend of Discovery...
A Lifetime of Love!*

Want to enhance your marriage?
Attend a Marriage Encounter Weekend!

The next weekend is **October 4-6, 2024** at the Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN. Register by going to **WWME.ORG** or contact Brent & Tracy Chessen (612-234-7440)

2025 Weekends all at Buffalo:
Feb. 14-16/May 16-18/Oct. 17-19

"Love One Another, As I Have Loved You"
John 15:12

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR FALL FESTIVAL GAMES

We are in need of about 40 people to help run the games at the festival. We would like to have at least 10 games and have 4 shifts so we can be open the entire time. Would prefer adults to help, but parents and their children are welcome. Please sign up online using the link on the GA website or the myParish app. Email kbstacken@gmail.com if you have any questions. Thank you!

APPLE CRISP WEEKEND

October 4-6th

GA Annual Apple Crisp weekend is October 4th-6th. We are in need of donated apples and workers to peel apples and bake. Join the fun Friday (Oct. 4th) at 3 p.m. in the school kitchen or on Saturday at 8 a.m. The Early Bird sale starts at 11 a.m. in the gym.

This event is eligible for a matching grant from Catholic United Financial of up to \$1,000.

Call (952) 448-7569 (Tina) to donate apples.

Local Rep: Team Countryside (612) 322-3228



THANK YOU GA CHURCH/SCHOOL MOWERS

This dedicated group of volunteers keep the church and school lawns mowed and weed-whipped. A special thanks to Jim Schleicher, who always makes sure the equipment is maintained and ready to go! If you'd like to join this fun little ministry and take a turn in the rotating schedule, please let us know.



POPULAR PARISH!

Guardian Angels and St. Nicholas have so many wonderful things going on that it doesn't all fit in the bulletin! If you submitted an article and it is not listed, don't fret! It will be included next week.



PIES PIES PIES

The Fall Festival will again have pies. Yeah!!

Please bring your donated pies to the school gym on Saturday, September 28th anytime after 9:00 a.m.

FAITH FORMATION BEGINS, SEPTEMBER 25TH!

Dear Faith Formation Families,

We are very excited to tell you about this year's program! New this year: for grades 1-5, parents will join their children as we learn our faith as a community together. Our parent meeting was September 11th, but it is not too late to register. We begin this week, September 25th. Please call Father Tony VanderLoop at (952) 679-9415 or email him at frtonyvanderloop@gachaska.org or Viviana Sotro at (952-227-4010 or vsotro@gachaska.org. We'd love to tell you about the new things we have planned for everyone—parents children, and youth in grades 1-12 as well as the GA community. We have a printable registration form and photo release at gachaska.org under Faith Formation that has instructions of how to fill out and send in. Here are some details of our program:

FOR GRADES 1-5, parents will join their children—first in the large group teaching, then leading their own family small group by grade level with the assistance of catechists.

FIRST RECONCILIATION AND COMMUNION PREPARATION: In addition to the weekly Family Formation sessions, we will meet for four Saturday sessions. Parents work with their children at home between sessions.

FOR GRADES 6-8, youth will meet in one large group, led by catechists who will teach the large group lesson, then facilitate grade level small groups.

FOR GRADES 9-12, teens in Year 1 & Year 2 Confirmation Preparation will meet in one large group teaching, then break out into small groups by year, led by classroom assistants and small group leaders.

ENCOUNTER is our parent formation. We want our parents to stay and continue to learn all about our Catholic faith in Jesus with other parishioners during the short time frame of a Wednesday evening class for your children or youth. We have small groups with trained leaders ready to lead in a format promoted by the Archdiocese. Parents of children in grades 1-5 are exempted since they will accompany their children in family formation.

We look forward to meeting you!

AN AFTERNOON AND EVENING DEVOTION INTERNATIONAL TRAVELING STATUE OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA

Come to all or part of this event on Tuesday, September 24th, at Guardian Angels church to pray for ourselves, our parishes, our country, and our world. Let's pray together and we hope to see you there!

1:00 p.m. The Statue of Our Lady of Fatima will be

set up near the ambo with Eucharistic Adoration

1:00 –5:30 p.m. Hours of Eucharistic Adoration

3:00 p.m. Chaplet of The Divine Mercy

4:00 p.m. Confession with Father Tony

4:45 p.m. The Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

Then, Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

5:20 p.m. Benediction and Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

5:30 p.m. Holy Mass

6:15 p.m. Talk by the Custodian about Our Lady of Fatima

6:30 p.m. Explanation of the Enrollment of the Scapular. Scapular Enrollment.

6:45 p.m. Brief explanation of personal and family consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Prayer of consecration of the family.

7:00 p.m. Private Prayers in front of Our Lady of Fatima

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Guardian Angels CATHOLIC CHURCH

SYNOD IMPLEMENTATION



You Will Be My Witnesses

Small Groups are starting up again this Fall!

Come and See! Join a small group to experience a sense of belonging, fellowship and friendship! We are truly better together! Please consider joining a small group at our parish this fall, or plan to continue in your current small group.

All are welcome, no matter where you are on your faith journey!

There are a variety of small groups available: Co-ed, Men's, Women's, Mom's, Dad's. The groups meet at various times and locations. Scan the QR code below to determine which group will work best for you.

Content and discussions this fall will be focused on the Mass and the Eucharist.

Scan the QR Code here to find a group



Contact Terry at tkschepers@gmail.com or 612.599.9901 for more information.



What does it mean to form my conscience?

Catholics have a long tradition of engagement in the public square. Sometimes that engagement requires making difficult moral decisions that impact our own lives and those of others. Our conscience can help guide the decisions we make. The Second Vatican Council guides us: “Always summoning [one] to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to [one’s] heart more specifically: do this, shun that” (*Gaudium et Spes* 16). However, our conscience doesn’t just come to us when we are born. We must work throughout our lives to form it through prayer, learning, and conversation.

How do I form my conscience?

It takes time to form our consciences so that we can make well-reasoned judgments about particular, real-life situations. The Church teaches that it is important to work continually on conscience formation so we can be prepared to make decisions whenever the opportunity arises. Some specific ideas to form your conscience are:

- 1) Begin by **being open to the truth** and what is right.
- 2) **Study Sacred Scripture** and the **teaching** of the Church.
- 3) **Examine the facts** and **background information** about various choices and be discerning in where we gather information.
- 4) **Prayerfully reflect** to discern the will of God (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 18).

Additionally, it is important to consider how our community of faith can help us form good consciences through some of these steps:

- 1) Seek the **prudent advice** and **good example** of trusted leaders and others to support and enlighten our conscience.
- 2) Learn about the **authoritative teaching** of the Church.
- 3) Pray for the **gifts of the Holy Spirit** to help us develop our conscience.
- 4) Regularly partake in an **examination of conscience** to hear God’s voice in your life.¹

Doing the work of forming our consciences can seem daunting. Fortunately, we have many church teachings that can help us in this important task. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* is an important resource for U.S. Catholics and helps us prayerfully reflect on how we can apply Church teaching in our civic life. “Conscience is not something that allows us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere “feeling” about what we should or should not do. Rather, **conscience is the voice of God resounding in the human heart**, revealing the truth to us and calling us to do what is good while shunning what is evil.”²

Here are some questions for further reflection:

1. When has my conscience guided me to “do good and avoid evil”?
2. What are some key resources I can use to form my conscience?
3. Forming conscience is a “lifelong task.” What do I do to *regularly* form my conscience? What more should I do?

¹ Catechism of the Catholic Church (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana–United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), 2000, no 1777

² USCCB. *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. Washington, DC: 2015, no. 17



Introductory Note



Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' parable summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals.

(Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 66)

As Catholics and Americans, we are blessed to be able to participate in our nation's political and public life. Our freedoms respect the dignity of individuals and their consciences and allow us to come together for the common good. Election seasons, therefore, should contain a sense of gratitude and hope. Our love for this country, our patriotism, properly impels us to vote.

But increasingly, it seems, election seasons are a time of anxiety and spiritual trial. Political rhetoric is increasingly angry, seeking to motivate primarily through division and hatred. Fear can be an effective tool for raising money. The most heated arguments online often get the most clicks. Demonizing the other can win votes.

We propose once more the moral framework of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* precisely as pastors, inspired by the Good Samaritan, with the hope of binding these wounds and healing these bitter divisions. This document is not based on personalities or partisanship, the latest news cycle, or what's trending on social media. Instead, it reflects the perennial role of the Church in public life in proclaiming timeless principles: the infinite

worth and dignity of every human life, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Not sure what these mean? We invite you to read a copy of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and learn more.

Allowing your conscience to be stretched and formed by these reflections can give you peace! They point to Jesus' challenge to show mercy to those in need, just as the Good Samaritan. As Pope Francis writes, "Here, all our distinctions, labels and masks fall away: it is the moment of truth. Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of others?" (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 70). Let this be in our hearts when we talk about politics and make political choices.

Some might be tempted to say: yes, of course, we will be the ones who help by promoting good and opposing evil. But when confronted with so much good at risk and so much evil, it is a great challenge to avoid fear and anger. The threat of abortion remains our pre-eminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless brothers and sisters and destroys more than a million lives per year in our country alone. Other grave threats to the life and dignity of the human person include euthanasia, gun violence, terrorism, the death penalty, and human trafficking. There is also the redefinition of marriage and gender, threats to religious freedom at home and abroad, lack of justice for the poor, the suffering of migrants and refugees, wars and famines around the world, racism, the need for greater access to healthcare and education, care for our common home, and more. All threaten the dignity of the human person.

So *precisely how* we promote good and oppose evil is an essential part of answering the Lord's call, of being a disciple. As St. Paul reminds us:

Never let evil talk pass your lips; say only the good things men need to hear, things that will really help them. Do nothing that will sadden the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed against the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind. In place of these, be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ (Eph. 4:29-32).

Thus, Pope Francis exhorts us to “genuine dialogue and openness to others,” by which we may “be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together” (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 203). This applies to the faithful both as voters and as candidates—we must consider not only candidates’ positions on these issues, but their character and integrity as well.

How can we meet this challenge? Again, St. Paul gives us a way: Put on “the mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16). Take time away from social media and spend time with Holy Scripture and the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off the TV and the podcast, and listen in silence. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, a homeless shelter, a crisis pregnancy center. Serve the poor, the needy, the outcast. Pray often, letting faith inform your political participation.

Participation in political life also requires judgments about concrete circumstances. While the bishops help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not tell the laity to vote for particular candidates. On these often complex matters, it is the laity’s responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ. Conscience is “a judgment of reason” by which one determines whether an action is right or wrong (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778). It does not allow us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere “feeling.” Conscience—properly formed according to God’s revelation and the teaching of the Church—is a means by which one listens to God and discerns how to act in accordance with the truth.¹ The truth is something we receive, not something we make. We can only judge using the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things true.

It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in Church life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do our best

to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions.

We must also seek wisdom, as Holy Scripture instructs:

Wisdom from above is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere. The harvest of justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace (Jas. 3:17-18).

The teachings of the Church, moreover, offer a vision of hope, where justice and mercy abound, because God is the infinite source of all goodness and love. With this wisdom and hope, we can find a way to bend down as the Good Samaritan did, through the fear and divisions, to touch and heal the wounds.

May God bless you as you consider and pray over these challenging decisions. May God bless our nation with true wisdom, peace, and mutual forgiveness, that we may decide together, through our democratic processes, to uphold the dignity of life and the common good.

This bulletin insert along with five others was approved by the body of U.S. bishops in November 2023. Find this and more complementary resources at www.faithfulcitizenship.org.

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¹ *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*, no. 16. See also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1785.