

This Tuesday the State of Missouri will conduct its presidential primary. This year will have far-reaching consequences for people at home and abroad. The election will set a course for the future, but it will also reveal the course of the present. We will find out how we are thinking as a nation and as a state.

Every four years the Catholic bishops of the United States publish a guide to the elections. It does not support any one candidate or any political party. Rather, it lays out the issues in the light of our moral principles. The title of the document this year is *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*. The full text runs for 36 pages, but you'll have a 2-page summary in the bulletin this weekend. I will address this topic at greater length [here] in St. Rita's on Monday night; all are welcome. I urge you to spend some time with this before going to the polls on Tuesday. Many people will claim to present the Catholic position for this election on the internet, in print or in pulpits. If you want the real source, consult this document: *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*.

The United States Constitution protects the right of religious bodies to speak out. The Catholic Church in the United States plays a role in political life because we believe Christ commands us to teach moral values. Those values come from scripture and tradition, and they help us assess political platforms. Our bishops aim to form our consciences about the upcoming elections, to make good and prudent choices.

*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* takes up these key themes: the right to life and the dignity of the human person; the call to family, community and participation; rights and responsibilities; the option for the poor and the vulnerable; the dignity of work and the rights of workers; solidarity; and caring for God's creation. The bishops oppose abuses to human life: abortion, euthanasia, cloning, the destruction of human embryos, assisted suicide, genocide, torture, targeting noncombatants, and the death penalty. They support marriage and family life, just wages, educational choices, and the responsible use of the media. They seek solutions to poverty, better access to health care, affordable housing, the elimination of hunger, a better immigration system, an end to discrimination, a protected environment, and global systems for peace and justice. We'll talk this over Monday night.

When St. Paul addressed his first letter to the Corinthians, he wrote to a community where "not many . . . were wise . . . , not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth." But, he said, God chose them anyway, and God gave them something more, the wisdom that comes from Jesus Christ.

My brothers and sisters, all of us Christians have the wisdom that comes from Jesus Christ, and it is our responsibility to use it this Tuesday and throughout this election year. Let us practice true wisdom and form our consciences for faithful citizenship.