

As the Holy Father taught in *Deus Caritas Est*, "The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful" (no. 29). This duty is more critical than ever in today's political environment, where Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and too few candidates fully share the Church's comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death. Yet this is not a time for retreat or discouragement; rather, it is a time for renewed engagement. ("*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*)

# WHAT WE HOLD MOST DEAR

As lay Catholics struggling to be faithful to the call of our bishops, we have arrived at the following judgments.

Fr. Giussani taught us that in front of life's real problems and challenges, what we hold most dear surfaces. Thus, within the privacy of the voting booth we will see "whether faith is really in the foreground, whether faith truly comes first, whether we really expect *everything* from the fact of Christ or whether we expect what we *decide* to expect from the fact of Christ."

We welcome the opportunity to vote as an educational one that will allow us to witness to what we hold most dear. We do not hope for salvation from politics or politicians. Yet we understand the critically important role that politics plays in our common American life.

For this reason two concerns matter most to us and we will vote according to which candidates and parties demonstrate an authentic care for these concerns.

**First: Freedom of Religion.** We seek that which Christians have always sought from the beginning: *libertas Ecclesiae*, the freedom of the Church. Political power must recognize faith's undeniable contribution to the defense and broadening of human reason and its promotion of authentic human progress. And this freedom must include the Church's freedom to speak, convince, act, and build in the public square; religious freedom relegated to one's private life is not religious freedom at all.

**Second: The Common Good.** Those who hold political power must do so as a service to the common good of the entire nation.

We consider the recognition and defense of three self-evident truths regarding human beings the *minimum commitment* to the common good: the **right to life from conception to natural death**; the **irreplaceable value of the family, founded on the marriage between a man and woman**; and **freedom of education**.

For the common good, we further seek politicians and political parties that value **subsidiarity**, a partnership between the public and private sectors facilitated by a robust non-profit sector. At the same time, we seek persons engaged in politics who recognize that subsidiarity can never annul the **solidarity** we owe to all our brothers and sisters living in this nation. There is no care for the common good that ignores basic human needs of millions in our nation.

These judgments will determine our support for particular candidates and political initiatives in the upcoming elections.