

**CAN AMERICAN CATHOLICS BE BOTH CITIZENS AND BELIEVERS IN THE PRESENT MOMENT?
THREE QUESTIONS OF CONSCIENCE**

- I. The Nature of Conscience (Catechism 1777)
 - A. Enjoins us to do good and avoid evil.
 - B. Bears witness to the authority of the Truth
 - C. Profound Interiority: Saint Augustine says "Return to your conscience, question it. Turn inward, brothers and sisters, and in everything you do, see God as your witness."
 - D. "The education of conscience is a life-long task. Prudent education teaches virtue; it prevents or cures fear, selfishness and pride, resentment arising from guilt, and feelings of complacency...The education of conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart."
 - E. A human heart must always obey the certain judgment of conscience.
 - F. The Problem of Rationalization

- II. The First Question of Conscience: What Motivates Us in Our lives as Citizens
 - A. Ultimately the most important question
 - B. The Need for an Honest Examination of Conscience
 - C. Political Life as Tribal
 1. Competition, like sports
 2. The triumph of my class, race, ideology
 3. An entire world-view
 - D. Political Life as an Extension of Self-Interest
 - E. Political Life as Alienating
 - F. Political life as an instrument for attaining the common good and safeguarding the dignity of the human person.

- III. The Principles that Guide Our Lives as Citizens and Believers: The Second Question of Conscience
 - A. The Right to Life and the Dignity of the Human Person
The preeminent issue of life
 - B. The Enhancement of Family Life
 - C. Human Rights
 1. Political rights of religion, speech, assembly
 2. Sustaining rights of food, shelter, clothing, health care
 - D. The Option for the Poor and the Vulnerable
 - E. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers
 - F. Solidarity
 - G. Caring for God's Creation
 - H. These norms transcend and critique the American culture in which we live.
 - I. These norms must always be seen with a global perspective

- IV. Intrinsic Evil, the Gravity of Evil and the Role of Law
 - A. Abortion and contraception are both intrinsically evil, but their gravity and role in public law differ. Abortion is preeminent because it is simultaneously intrinsically evil, gravely evil and directly related to the most fundamental role of law in any society, namely the protection of human life.
 - B. War and economic policies that produce world hunger are not intrinsically, but they produce some of the gravest evils our world knows.
 - C. Those who reduce the responsibility of Catholic voters to a choice against intrinsic evils by in effect endorsing “merely” grave but not intrinsically evil policies distort Catholic social teaching.
 - D. “The fact that only the negative commandments oblige always and under all circumstances does not mean the in the moral life prohibitions are more important than the obligation to do good indicated by the positive commandment. (*Veritatis Splendor*, no 52)

- V. The Application of Catholic Social Principles to the Act of Voting: the Third Question of Conscience
 - A. The Partisan Structure of American Politics Bisepts the Catholic Vision of Human Dignity and the Common Good
 - B. The Moral Act of Voting seeks to empower those elected to advance the comprehensive common good
 - 1. Not an endorsement of the person’s platform
 - 2. Affected by the nature of the particular office a candidate is seeking
 - 3. Recognizing a candidate’s actual capacity to accomplish a particular good in the real policy world.
 - C. Avoids the moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions or prioritization among the issues touching upon human life and dignity.
 - D. Yet also avoids misusing such moral distinctions as a way of ignoring other serious threats to life and dignity.

- VI. Citizenship and Conscience are both freedoms which we should treasure, but ultimately see as responsibilities in the light of faith.