

Nine Days for Our State and Nation

Preparing for Election Day 2016

As we approach Election Day, we ask for God's guidance. By prayerfully turning to our Father, we are reminded that our nation is dependent upon his continued blessing, and acknowledge his sovereignty over all things, our political action included. After all, our vote isn't to be frivolously cast; rather, it is to be used to build up a more just society where all can flourish.

This Novena includes reflections adapted from the USCCB's "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," and daily prayers of supplication. Use it to humbly prepare your heart for Election Day.

October 30: Religious Liberty

Reflection

Religious liberty is our first and most cherished freedom. It is rooted in the very dignity of the human person, a fundamental human right that knows no geographical boundaries.

But religious liberty is threatened in America. Individuals and faith-based organizations face increasing legal pressure to abandon their convictions as a requirement for full participation in society; the poor and vulnerable, whom they serve, suffer as a result. Now more than ever, we need leaders who recognize the importance of religious liberty and will take steps to protect it.

Read paragraphs 49, 72, and 76 of Faithful Citizenship for more.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you created us to love and serve you in everything we do. Please help us support candidates who will protect the rights of citizens to worship and fully practice their faith. Through Christ, Our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Questions

- Where does the candidate stand on the right of religious institutions to operate and serve the general public in a manner consistent with the organization's faith-based mission?
- Where does the candidate stand on the right of individuals to live their faith in their school, place of employment, or business?



October 31: Life and Bioethics

Reflection

Life is the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others. Each human life is willed by the Father, and therefore deserves protection from conception until natural death.

But it is no secret that our nation is pervaded by a culture of death. Human life, from the unborn to the elderly and disabled, is devalued, and treated as a disposable commodity when it is deemed "inconvenient" or ceases to be "useful." A society free from abortion and other forms of violence is a goal towards which elected officials must strive.

Read paragraphs 64-69 and 71 of Faithful Citizenship for more.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you created every human life with unrepeatable and inestimable value. May we elect candidates who have a profound reverence for the sanctity of human life, and seek to protect all lives from the moment of conception to a natural death. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Questions

- Where does the candidate stand on the need to enact legislative limits on abortion?
- Where does the candidate stand on reducing practices that destroy innocent human life, such as assisted suicide, embryonic stem cell research, gun violence, and wars of aggression?



Daily Novena Prayer

(Begin each day with this prayer)

Virgin Mary, patroness of America, please prepare our hearts as we take part in this year's elections. Help us to humbly receive the wisdom of the Church, and to accept the importance of Her teachings in our lives and voting decisions.

Guide us as we choose leaders who will best uphold the common good and the dignity of all.

In your Son's name, Amen.

November 1: The Poor and Vulnerable

Reflection

In a special way, Christ calls us to care for the poor and vulnerable in our midst. While we must tend to these brothers and sisters with individual acts of charity, we must also strive to build a society where the basic needs of all can be met.

Welfare policy should reduce poverty and dependency, strengthen family life, and help families break the cycle of poverty by addressing the factors of family breakdown. It should also provide a safety net for those who cannot work.

Read paragraphs 53 and 73-79 of Faithful Citizenship for more.

Prayer

Christ Jesus, you told us that You are present in the "least of these." Please help us elect officials who will support policies that complement our own individual efforts to care for the poor and vulnerable. In your name, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on promoting policies that will help families break free from the cycle of poverty?



November 2: Care for creation

Reflection

Care for creation is a moral issue. Protecting the land, water, and air we share is a religious duty of stewardship. It reflects our responsibility to the poor and weak among us, who are most vulnerable to environmental harm, and also to generations to come.

Effective initiatives are required for energy conservation, sustainable agriculture, and the development of alternate, renewable and clean-energy resources. These policies must be pursued while maintaining proper respect for human life.

Read paragraphs 51, 79, and 86 of Faithful Citizenship for more.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you gave us this earth to till and to keep. May we elect leaders who pursue policies that respect the gift of creation and ensure its bounty is available to all, now and in the future. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on enacting policies that foster sustainable agricultural practices, family farming, and the use of renewable sources of energy?



November 3: Labor and Economy

Reflection

Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Workers, owners, employers, and unions have a corresponding responsibility to work together to create decent jobs, build a more just economy, and advance the common good. Economic policy should promote the flourishing of all, not the interests of a few.



Read paragraphs 50, 52 and 73 of *Faithful Citizenship* for more.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, you created man to work, glorifying you in our everyday labors. Help us to elect officials who recognize the dignity of work, and are committed to just economic policies. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on policies that foster economic participation and the creation of jobs that provide decent working conditions and just wages?

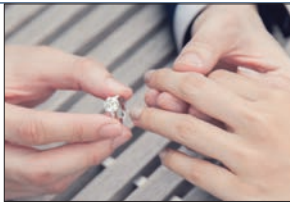
November 4: Marriage and Family

Reflection

The family founded upon marriage is the basic cell of human society. The role, responsibilities, and needs of families should be central priorities.

Marriage must be promoted and protected as the lifelong exclusive commitment between a man and a woman, which serves as the source of the next generation and a protective haven for children. Social and economic policies should uphold the God-given meaning and value of marriage and family, help families stay together, and reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. We must also continue to affirm the complementarity of the sexes, and prevent the spread of harmful and false gender ideologies.

Read paragraphs 46, 70-71, and 75 of *Faithful Citizenship* for more.



Prayer

Lord God, you willed that all children be conceived, born, and raised by a loving mother and father. Help us to discern and support elected officials who respect your plan for the family and will support its integrity through public policy. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on policies that protect the stability of the marriage bond and the best interests of children?

November 5: Immigration

Reflection

The Gospel mandate to “welcome the stranger” requires Catholics to care for and stand with newcomers, authorized and unauthorized.

Comprehensive reform is urgently necessary to fix a broken immigration system. Reform should provide a pathway to citizenship for immigrants and prioritize family reunification, while addressing the root causes of migration and maintaining the right and responsibility of nations to control their borders.

Read paragraphs 81 and 70 of *Faithful Citizenship* for more.



Prayer

Christ Jesus, you call upon us to welcome the stranger in our midst. May we elect officials who pursue policies that recognize the dignity of all migrants. In your name, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on giving undocumented persons greater access to health care and transportation options to protect their dignity and support their families?

November 6: Education

Reflection

Parents — the first and most important educators — have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children. Government policy should help provide options for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this right.

All persons have the right to receive a quality education. Young people, including those who are poor and those with disabilities, need the opportunity to develop intellectually, morally, spiritually, and physically, allowing them to become responsible citizens.

Read paragraphs 46 and 82-83 of *Faithful Citizenship* for more.



Prayer

God the Father, you ask all parents to lead their children on the path of wisdom. Help us to discern and elect candidates who will support parents in this important vocation. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on expanding school choice options, such as tuition tax credits and opportunity scholarship programs?

November 7: Health Care

Reflection

Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right, yet millions of Americans still lack health care coverage.

The nation's health care system needs to be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, respect the principle of subsidiarity, and meet the needs of the poor and the vulnerable. Employers should be able to provide health care without compromising their convictions, and individuals should be able to purchase health care that accords to their faith.

Read paragraphs 65-66, 75, and 80 of *Faithful Citizenship* for more.



Prayer

Heavenly Father, you desire that all your children are adequately cared for. Guide our election day decisions so that we might choose leaders who are committed to ethical care for all. Through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Discernment Question

- Where does the candidate stand on expanding access to health care, especially to the poor, while ensuring that employers and individuals can access health care without compromising their moral and religious beliefs?

November 8: Prayer for Election Day

Heavenly Father, I have prepared for this day by praying for your guidance and reflecting on the social teachings of your Church. As I enter the voting booth, please fill me with your spirit, so that I might make principled, prudent decisions. I ask for your continued blessing and protection upon our nation and our state.

Through Christ, our Lord, Amen

Don't forget to vote!

Pray the Novena, which was written by the Minnesota Catholic Conference, with the bishops and access more Election Day resources at MNCatholic.org.