

## Faithful Citizenship: Our Responsibility

By The Most Reverend Glen John Provost  
Bishop of Lake Charles

In November of 2007, the Catholic Bishops of the United States issued a document entitled, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship." The purpose of this instruction for Catholics was "to address political and social questions by helping them to develop a well-formed conscience" (#17). In light of this document and the decisions that we as Catholics must make as responsible citizens, I add my own instruction. I will do so by addressing some questions that Catholics often ask.

1. What is conscience? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, "Conscience is a judgment of reason by which the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act" (#1796). "Following your conscience" does not mean "doing as you wish." Conscience is not an arbitrary "feeling" or an "opinion." The Catechism continues, "Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator" (#1783). Each and every one of us has an obligation to inform his or her conscience correctly, according to the truth.

2. What is the purpose of any political process? Any legitimate political process seeks the common good. When Cain, after having killed his brother Abel, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9), the answer is a resounding "Yes." Jesus reaffirmed that answer. He did so most notably in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The Good Samaritan overlooks the differences of culture and tradition, looks beyond the distinctions of foreigner and citizen, and assists someone who has fallen victim to robbers and been left to die. One's opinion or arbitrary "feelings", much less any narrow self-interest, is not reason enough to vote for a particular measure or candidate. The benefit of the common good must be first and foremost. The common good, as Genesis and the Parable of the Good Samaritan also remind us, involves not only our social well-being but also our true and highest good. With this in mind, the pursuit of the common good cannot be an excuse to abrogate a person's fundamen-

tal rights. Finally, let us make this observation about the political process. We must remember that in a democracy, the government reflects the society, for better or worse. As Thomas Jefferson observed, a true democracy presupposes virtuous citizens.

3. Does the Church tell me how to vote? No, it does not. Neither I nor anyone else in the Church is telling anyone how to vote. The Church would be negligent, however, if it did not teach particularly in moral matters. As the Catechism says in quoting the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the mission of the Church is "to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it" (#2246). The Church is obliged by the teachings of Our Lord to communicate without compromise the truth in the area of morals, especially as they impact the common good of the society. The Church is involved in this instruction also because it is a free member of the society. The Church also has rights.

4. What are some important moral judgments? The first and foremost is the right to life. A civilized society insures the basic freedom to live for each and every citizen. The obligation for the common good obligates all of us to assist the defenseless, whether they be children in the womb, persons weakened by age and illness or victims of human engineering. Life is fundamental. Therefore, acts that promote the destruction of innocent life, like abortion, are intrinsically evil. The taking of innocent life is never justifiable, and a law that permits this is flawed because it violates the common good.

5. Are capital punishment and war also pro-life issues? They certainly are. The difference is that capital punishment and war are not intrinsic evils. While capital punishment and war must remain rarely justified, self-defense and defense of the nation, which are both a right and responsibility, can motivate them. Abortion is never justified. In the matter of voting, one cannot justify a vote for a candidate who promotes an intrinsic evil, while appealing to that same candidate's opposition to war or capital punishment. To vote for a candidate with the purpose of promoting an immoral practice violates a good conscience. In doing so

one directly wills and participates in choosing and bringing about evil. Voting for a "pro-abortion" candidate helps make possible the destruction of innocent life.

6. If all candidates favor abortion, but in different circumstances, then what choice is there? There is no justification for voting for a candidate who endorses the killing of the innocent without restriction or reservation. Faced with a totally "pro-choice" or "pro-abortion" roster, one could only vote for the candidate who proposes to do the "lesser evil."

7. Are social justice issues also pro-life issues? Issues such as poverty, housing, and education are part of pro-life concerns. One must always remember that social conditions presuppose the protection of human life. The protection of human life is fundamental. Without the protection of human life, society and its concerns about the common welfare of its citizens are in jeopardy. The right to life for every innocent person is inalienable and a fundamental principle for civil society and its laws. In the words of Pope John Paul II, as quoted in the bishops' document, "...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 maximum determination (Christifideles Laici, no. 38)" (Faithful Citizenship #26).

All issues, as they involve the common good, are related. However, not all issues are equal. Some are fundamental, like life. Others require greater definition, like poverty. Still others are terribly complex, like war. All of them are important but not equivalent. Because they are important, they require careful consideration. Voting for a law out of self-interest or a candidate because of an arbitrary "feeling" or the candidate's appearance is out of the question for a conscientious voter. The society cannot afford such superficiality. The Catholic voter must first find out exactly what positions a candidate is taking. Then, the voter should seek to inform his or her conscience, according to the truth and solid moral principles. The voter next must bring the decision to prayer. Finally, the voter must act responsibly.

## Two priests, a deacon ordained by Bishop Provost

LAKE CHARLES – Two priests and a transitional deacon were ordained for the Diocese of Lake Charles by The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, Bishop of Lake Charles, Saturday, May 10, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Ordained to the priesthood were Rev. Ruben Buller and Rev. Nathan Long while Deacon Scott Conner advanced toward his own priestly vocation with his ordination to the Diaconate.

Father Buller will serve as Parochial Vicar to St. Henry Parish in Lake Charles as well as Chaplain to Sacred Heart/Saint Katharine Drexel Catholic School in Lake Charles. Father Long was appointed Parochial Vicar to Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in Lake Charles.

During the summer Deacon Conner will have weekend pastoral duties at Sacred Heart Parish and Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish, both in Lake Charles.

Bishop Provost pointed out in his homily that, "The Lord Jesus himself sets the theme, as He should, for our reflection at this ordination ceremony."

Quoting Luke 12:37, the Bishop said, "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival." The defining word here is "vigilant", which in the original Greek means "to be awake". In some transla-

tions, the word is translated 'watching'.

"The master returns from a wedding," the Bishop continued. "He has left the servants in charge. He expects to find them waiting. Why is the master so thankful to his servants for being vigilant? A subsequent verse (Luke 12:39) tells us why. 'If the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into'. Vigilant servants keep the thieves away. The master is thankful because the servants have protected his house from thieves. As servants, you are being ordained to vigilance."

Bishop Provost further pointed that in Acts 20:30, St. Paul says, "'So be vigilant.' Be vigilant as good servants, so that the Master will seat you at His meal and feed you, in thankfulness that His flock, His possession, has been kept intact," the Bishop continued. "The true servant is the vigilant servant."

"The truth is Jesus Christ. Jesus is not the Jesus of your imagination. He is not subject to your opinion, much less your feelings. He did reveal Himself and the Father who sent Him. He also founded a Church, a flock that must be one with Him. It is the Body of Christ as St. Paul speaks of it, and to dismember it is not an option. Jesus is true because He is real.

"As ordained ministers, you should have no difficulty with reality because you are men of prayer who have met Christ. In prayer, solid, open, frank, and sincere conversation with God, you cannot ignore reality. The truth about you will become apparent. In prayer, you will strive to know even as you are known. All façade will fall. All deception will be negated. You will encounter Jesus himself. You will stand exposed before God. "Savage wolves" have no defense against such truth."

"In obedience, you embrace God's will first and foremost," he said. "If that were not challenge enough, you must learn to see that will in proper authority. In a world where truth is relative, obedience makes no sense, because I am too busy being myself, whatever that is. Even when it appears unreasonable or not to your liking, obedience like a fine tool carves away the self and reveals the humility that makes His yoke easy and His burden light.



Bishop Glen John Provost stands with the newly ordained following the Saturday May 10 Liturgy in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The Bishop ordained Rev. Nathan Long, left, Rev. Ruben Buller, second from right, and Deacon Scott Conner.

"In celibacy, you will take upon yourselves a commitment to chastity," Bishop Provost continued. "No one and nothing must keep you from the one and only love of your life, who is Jesus Christ. He is your only friend. He is your only companion. He is the truth that you believe, preach, and serve. Again, a world of relativity cannot understand celibacy, because there is no ultimate commitment. In turn, that world will try to discredit your commitment because that celibacy is a contradiction to the world's superficiality. You must live exemplary lives, so that a self-indulgent and materialistic world can be called back to the truth be-

cause it sees in you a commitment that it should be living. The world will see in your celibacy a witness to the truth, a truth that it has made relative but you say is real."

In closing, the Bishop said, "No priest is ever alone. He lives in Christ and in His Church. He is vigilant in the truth, confident of his relationship with the master, watching for his return. And, when the master comes, He 'will gird himself', have you 'recline at table', 'and proceed to wait on' you (Luke 12:37), serving you with the banquet of His Eucharist. The thieves will not have entered. The flock will be safe. The master will prove that you are his beloved."

## Prayer breakfast date changed to Thursday, June 5

LAKE CHARLES – The June Men's Prayer Breakfast with Bishop Glen John Provost will be held at 7 a.m. Thursday, June 5, in the Ave Maria Hall of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, 935 Kirby Street.

The date was moved due to a change in Bishop Provost's schedule from its normal First Friday date.

All Catholic men are asked to register for the event by calling 439-7400.

## Official Appointments



His Excellency, The Most Reverend Glen John Provost, D.D., makes the following appointments:

The following pastor continues in service:  
The Rev. Marshall Boulet, as Pastor of St. Paul Parish in Elton and Administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Elton.

The following are clergy who have achieved the status of Senior Priest, according to the diocesan norm:  
The Rev. James Doyle, continuing in service as Defender of the Bond;

The Rev. Msgr. Vincent Sedita, continuing in service as Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Sulphur and Dean of the West Deanery.

The following are clergy who are appointed for an additional term, according to Canon Law and the diocesan norm, effective Tuesday, July 1, of this Year of Our Lord:

The Rev. Keith Pellerin, as Pastor of St. Martin de Porres Parish in Lake Charles;

The Rev. M. Susil Fernando, as Pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Vinton;

The Rev. V. Wayne LeBleu, as Pastor of Christ the King Parish in Lake Charles;

The Very Rev. Archimandrite Herbert May, as Pastor of Our Lady of Seven Dolours Parish in Welsh;

The Rev. Michael Barras, as Pastor of St. Joan of Arc Parish in Oberlin;

The Rev. Alan Trouille, as pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Lake Charles;

The Rev. Vincent Vadakkedath, as Pastor of St. Eugene Parish in Grand Chenier;

The Very Rev. Henry Mancuso, as Pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish in Lake Charles;

The Rev. Carlos Garcia-Cardona, as Pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish in Kinder.

The following clergyman is appointed as administrator:  
The Rev. Celsius Offor, as Administrator of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Jennings, continuing as Administrator of St. Joseph Parish in Welsh.

The following are clergy appointed to new pastorates, effective Tuesday, July 1 of this Year of Our Lord:

The Rev. Albert Borel, as Pastor of St. John Bosco Parish in Westlake, continuing his service to the Diocesan Tribunal;

The Rev. Rommel Tolentino, as Pastor of St. Peter the Apostle Parish in Hackberry, with its mission Chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption in Johnson Bayou;

The Rev. Roland Vaughn, as Pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in Fenton, with its mission Chapel of St. John the Evangelist in Lacassine;

The Rev. Augustine Mullanjanany, as Pastor of St. John Vianney Parish in Bell City;

The Rev. Anthony Fontenot, as Pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Jennings.

The following are clergy appointed to special offices and ministries "ad beneplacitum Episcopi", effective Tuesday, July 1, of this Year of Our Lord:

The Rev. Richard Adiuoku, as Chaplain to West Calcasieu Cameron Hospital in Sulphur, with residence at Our Lady of Prompt Succor Rectory in Sulphur and continuing as Chaplain to the Seafarers' Center;

The Rev. Derek Covert, as Secretary Adjutant to the Bishop, continuing as Parochial Vicar of St. Margaret Parish in Lake Charles;

The Very Rev. Archimandrite Herbert May, as co-Director of Permanent Diaconate Formation;

The Rev. Msgr. Ronald Groth, as co-Director of Permanent Diaconate Formation;

The Rev. Anthony Fontenot, as Vocation Recruiter;

The Rev. Msgr. Jace Eskind, as full-time Judicial Vicar and Director of the Office of Worship, with residence at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Lake Charles.

The following are the assignments of those newly ordained, effective Tuesday, July 1, of this Year of Our Lord:

The Rev. Deacon Jacob Scott Conner, in residence at L'Veche to complete his thesis, with weekend pastoral duties at Sacred Heart Parish and Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in Lake Charles.

The Rev. Nathan Long, as Parochial Vicar of Our Lady Queen of Heaven Parish in Lake Charles;

The Rev. Ruben Buller, as Parochial Vicar of St. Henry Parish in Lake Charles and Chaplain to Sacred Heart/St. Katharine Drexel School in Lake Charles.

Given from our Chancery on this day of Grace in the Presence of God's People Saturday, the Tenth of May in the Year of Our Lord 2008

By order of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Ordinary,

*Glen John Provost*

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