



# Faithful Citizenship 2008

*Fifth in a Series*

## Family Life & Participation / Rights & Responsibilities

“The family is the *original cell of social life*. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom.

Family life is an initiation into life in society.”

*Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207*

### **Catholic Social Doctrine**

Catholic teaching holds that the human person is not only sacred, but also social. That is, human beings are not mere individuals, but are intrinsically related to one another. Moreover, because the most basic social unit is the family, the Church teaches that the needs and concerns of marriage and the family must be made a priority.

The institution of marriage should be protected by society because it makes possible the continuation of the human family, the education and development of individual members, and the creation of a free and stable society.

Family life is an initiation into life in society and “how we organize our society – politically, economically, socially – directly affects the common good and the capacity of individuals to develop their full potential. Every person has a duty to participate actively in shaping society...” (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (FCFC) 47)

The Catholic tradition also teaches that human dignity can be achieved only if human rights are protected. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right both to life and to those things required for human decency: the

right to productive work and decent and fair wages, to food and water, to decent housing and adequate health care.

Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

For example, as citizens we have a moral and social responsibility for the affairs of the community. Thus we must protect our right to vote and secure that same right for others so we all may be responsible citizens.

In the area of education, parents have the primary responsibility to see that their children are prepared for life as adults. From this responsibility flows a right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including religious and independent schools. Social justice demands that poor families should be supported in their efforts to send their children to the school of their choice.

Support for “family values” must also extend to fostering a family-friendly culture outside the home that is free of both physical dangers and other corrosive influences such as pornography and other media that promote violence, pre-marital sex, drugs, and other destructive behaviors.

In particular, public policies must promote the safety and well-being of our children, protecting them from all forms of abuse. As Catholics, we affirm our commitment to the protection of children in all settings, as reflected within our Church in the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*.

### Key Issues

Because society depends on the contributions of individuals who are able to contribute freely from their God-given talents and abilities, policies must foster both our family life at home and the full participation of all people in the life of the community.

Therefore we call on you to:

- Protect **marriage** as a lifelong commitment between a man and woman.
- Adopt a more humane **immigration and refugee** policy based on promoting family reunification; providing temporary or permanent safe haven for those in need; protecting immigrant workers from exploitation; and safeguarding the right of all peoples to return to their homelands.
- Support policies to guarantee a **living wage** (i.e. sufficient to meet the basic needs of a worker and his/her dependents).

- Provide affordable and accessible **health care** to everyone, but most especially to children, elders, and persons with disabilities.
- Respect parental responsibility by strengthening laws regarding **parental consent for abortion** and by limiting programs that facilitate youth access to contraceptive services, such as the **Family Planning Waiver Program**, without parental knowledge or consent.
- Support increases in the state **tax credit for adoption expenses**.
- Support **adequate funding for education**, especially for economically or socially disadvantaged children.
- Support **school choice** for all, but especially for low-income families.
- Allow religious and independent schools to participate equitably in all government efforts to improve education, especially those directed towards **children with special needs**.
- Enforce existing **obscenity and child pornography laws** and support technology that assists parents, schools, and libraries in blocking out unwanted materials on the Internet.

### Resources

*Deus caritas est (God Is Love)*, Pope Benedict XIV, 2005

*Charter of the Rights of the Family*, The Holy See, 1983

*Familiaris consortio (On the Family)*, Pope John Paul II, 1981

*Renewing Our Commitment to Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Third Millennium*, USCCB, 2005

*Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers about Marriage and Same-Sex Unions*, USCCB, 2003

*Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*, USCCB, 2002

*When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women*, USCCB, 2002

*Renewing the Mind of the Media*, USCCB, 1998

*Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*, USCCB Committee on Marriage and Family, 1997

*Follow the Way of Love: A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops to Families*, USCCB, 1993

*A Letter to Catholics in Wisconsin on Defining Marriage in Our State Constitution*, WCC, 2006

Resources available on the web:  
Go to [www.wisconsinatholic.org](http://www.wisconsinatholic.org)  
Click on "Elections 2008"