



## **FORMED AND INFORMED CONSCIENCES**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Let's remember the U.S. Bishops' info on their website (USCCB) on how to form and inform our conscience. I always think that it is also good to make sure we are in-line with Church around the world through following what the Pope is saying, and what the national body of bishops are saying.

Our national body of bishops offers information on the different issues that face Catholics in our society, and they are balanced in how they face off on issues all across the political spectrum. Indeed, I do find that the consistent teachings of our Church are a real sign of integrity and a reason why I love being Catholic and feel that God's truth is working through our Church, because we are not afraid to NOT be partisan, but to go for the truth in ALL areas of moral life. I find that all of us (including me) tend to have issues that are more important to us, but let's look to the Vatican and the U.S. Bishops' materials to keep always attempting to be fully Catholic in how we are handling our formation of conscience.

Indeed, in the 2012 Document from the U.S. Catholic Bishops, called “Faithful Citizenship,” the bishops warned against two extremes in how a Catholic dealt with Catholic teaching in their voting:

1. The first would be, a temptation to make everything morally equivalent – so that a big issue like the sacredness of human life couldn’t be made equivalent to an issue like access to college loans, even though we care about a young person being able to afford college these days. (#28)
2. HOWEVER, the bishops also say (#29) that one also can’t simply focus ONLY on the issue of respect for life and to ignore other issues the Church presents to us. That we can’t “misuse” the making of distinctions between the importance of various issues so that we can “ignore” issues like racism, the death penalty, the failure to respond to issues of world hunger or that many don’t have access to health care, etc.

## **PREACHING ON “ISSUES” AT MASS:**

**Once in a while, some Catholics might want priests to use the homily time to give explanations to give extensive treatments about moral topics to help Catholics in their understanding of their faith. But as Catholics, while we might have classes in Catholic teaching (we do here at Holy Family), or information on a website or in the bulletin (we do that here at Holy Family), in the eyes of the Church, the Mass is a time to spend contemplating our faith in Jesus Christ.**

**I do give two weekends a year to giving a broad-reaching explanation of Catholic moral teaching and social teaching (moral teaching from the womb to the tomb and inclusive of issues pertaining to the poor), and we have touched on some issues even in recent weeks here at Holy Family, but besides the issue of there being CHILDREN present at mass, (and that some of these topics would be confusing for them), the long tradition of the saints and our Popes is to focus on the core gospel message at mass and not on teaching specific topics.**

**Indeed: From REDEMPTIONIS SACRAMENTUM,** an instruction on the proper way to celebrate Mass in the Roman Rite:

*“Particular care is to be taken so that the homily is firmly based upon the mysteries of salvation, expounding the mysteries of the faith and the norms of Christian life from the biblical readings and liturgical texts throughout the course of the liturgical year and providing commentary on the texts of the Ordinary or the Proper of the Mass, or of some other rite of the Church. It is clear that all interpretations of Sacred Scripture are to be referred back to Christ himself as the one upon whom the entire economy of salvation hinges, though this should be done in light of the specific context of the liturgical celebration. In the homily to be given, care is to be taken so that the light of Christ may shine upon life’s events. Even so, this is to be done so as not to obscure the true and unadulterated word of God: for instance, treating only of politics....(67).”*

And if one looks at the thousands of homilies of someone like Pope John Paul II, one can see that he was always using the homily at mass to inspire people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to pray with people about their faith.

Finally, I also recently contacted the bishops of our Archdiocese to make sure that I was in-line with the Church and our archdiocese on this issue, and was assured by one of our bishops that I was “on the right track” in how much I was using homily time and Mass time to deal with specific issues.

Again, I do devote two weekends a year (Oct. and Jan.) to covering the whole spectrum of Catholic beliefs about the sacredness of all human life and the dignity that all men, women and children deserve in society....and we have put a lot of information from our bishops and our archdiocese about different issues into our bulletin and our website week to week, but the normal Mass experience is

one where we are to talk about what **REDEMPTIONIS SACRAMENTUM** tells us to talk about:

“...that the homily is firmly based upon the mysteries of salvation, expounding the mysteries of the faith and the norms of Christian life... referred back to Christ himself....67).”

Let's keep praying, and let's keep going to Mass to renew our faith in Christ, and let's keep going to adult ed classes, the bishops' website (let's remember that this is the best source to go to for what our Church teaches), and our own website to get better informed on all the issues out there.

