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“The Church, for her part, wishes to contribute to building a world ever more worthy of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27). She is convinced that faith sheds new light on all things, and that the Gospel reveals the noble vocation and sublime destiny of every man and woman (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 10).

“Faith also gives us the strength to respond to our high calling, and the hope that inspires us to work for an ever more just and fraternal society.

“Democracy can only flourish, as your founding fathers realized, when political leaders and those whom they represent are guided by truth and bring the wisdom born of firm moral principle to decisions affecting the life and future of the nation.”

— excerpt from Pope Benedict XVI’s address
during the welcoming ceremony at the White House
April 16, 2008

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I hope that the beauty of spring and your Marian celebrations during this month of May have drawn you closer to our Risen Lord.

Every four years, the U.S. Catholic bishops call upon the Catholics in our nation to reflect very seriously on the tremendous responsibility we have as participants in our nation’s political life. The title of this year’s statement is “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.”

To assist in disseminating this statement, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has developed a Web site that contains statements from the U.S. bishops and the Vatican on the political responsibilities of Catholics, prayer and worship materials, educational programs, youth resources, family discussion guidelines, and clip art and logos to assist in publicizing the U.S. bishops’ statement.

I encourage you to visit the Web site, www.faithfulcitizenship.org (en Espanol, www.ciudadanosfieles.org) which includes the entire text of the faithful citizenship statement.

This edition of The Catholic News & Herald includes a condensed version of the U.S. bishops’ statement.

As the statement explains, the U.S. Catholic bishops “do not intend to tell Catholics for whom or against whom to vote. Our purpose is to help Catholics form their consciences in accordance with God’s truth.”

Each Catholic has the responsibility to properly inform his or her own conscience in preparation for the important role of being a participant in the democratic process.

As Catholics we believe the Catholic Church, through its teachings, plays a critical role in helping Catholics to form their consciences. A properly formed conscience, that has weighed carefully the moral and social teachings of the Church, is a firm foundation upon which “Catholics are better able to evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates’ promises and action.”

We are called to promote the common good by affirming the value of every human life and combating threats to human life and human dignity. When we promote the common good we must acknowledge that the direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life is always wrong, and always to be opposed.

We are required to act against policies that diminish, disregard or violate the dignity and rights to which all humanity is entitled. The most vulnerable and weakest of our brothers and sisters have a claim on our attention, our assistance and our prayers.

As you prepare yourself for involvement in the political process, I ask you to examine concurrently the teachings of the Church, the positions of candidates on the many issues that directly impact human life and dignity, and the integrity and performance of the women and men who seek your votes.

Thank you for your attentiveness to the message of “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States.”

May Mary our Mother, patroness of the Americas and Queen of Peace, intercede for us as we seek to be faithful witnesses to the moral and social teachings of Christ and the Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Most Reverend Peter J. Jugis
Bishop of Charlotte