



# FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP 2014

This series has been prepared by the Wisconsin Catholic Conference as a guide for those who wish to inform their consciences in order to participate more fully in the political process. To learn more about the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (FCFC), visit [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org) and [www.wisconsinatholic.org](http://www.wisconsinatholic.org).

Third in a seven-part series

## LIFE & DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

### Why is protecting the unborn of such great importance?

As Pope Francis explains, “Among the vulnerable for whom the Church wishes to care with particular love and concern are unborn children, the most defenceless and innocent among us. Nowadays efforts are made to deny them their human dignity and to do with them whatever one pleases, taking their lives and passing laws preventing anyone from standing in the way of this. ... [T]his defence of unborn life is closely linked to the defence of each and every other human right. It involves the conviction that a human being is always sacred and inviolable, in any situation and at every stage of development. Human beings are ends in themselves and never a means of resolving other problems. Once this conviction disappears, so do solid and lasting foundations for the defence of human rights, which would always be subject to the passing whims of the powers that be.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 213)

### What about other human rights?

“The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights – to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life. The moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors – basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work – is universally binding on our consciences and may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means. Catholics must seek the best ways to respond to these needs.” (*FCFC*, 25)

**THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON IS THE FOUNDATION OF A MORAL VISION FOR SOCIETY. DIRECT ATTACKS ON INNOCENT PERSONS ARE NEVER MORALLY ACCEPTABLE.**



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### What about the death penalty?

“If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2267)

# PEACE & NON-VIOLENCE

## What does the Church teach about peace?

As Pope Francis has written, “Peace in society cannot be understood as pacification or the mere absence of violence resulting from the domination of one part of society over others. Nor does true peace act as a pretext for justifying a social structure which silences or appeases the poor, so that the more affluent can placidly support their lifestyle while others have to make do as they can. Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised.”

“Nor is peace ‘simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day towards the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect justice among men’. In the end, a peace which is not the result of integral development will be doomed; it will always spawn new conflicts and various forms of violence.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 218-19)



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**BY PREACHING JESUS CHRIST, WHO IS HIMSELF PEACE (CF. *EPH 2:14*), THE NEW EVANGELIZATION CALLS ON EVERY BAPTIZED PERSON TO BE A PEACEMAKER AND A CREDIBLE WITNESS TO A RECONCILED LIFE.**

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 239)

## How should nations respond if attacked?

“Nations are called to protect the right to life by seeking effective ways to combat evil and terror without resorting to armed conflicts except as a last resort, always seeking first to resolve disputes by peaceful means.” (*FCFC* 45)

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## Where is peace absent?

“Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27, as cited in St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 3)

## What is the best approach to promoting peace and non-violence?

“We have a responsibility to discern carefully which public policies are morally sound. Catholics may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems, but we cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended.” (*FCFC*, 20)