



# 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).

Fifth in a seven-part series

## MARRIAGE & FAMILY

### Why are marriage and family essential to society?

As Pope Francis has written, “[T]he family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another; it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. Marriage now tends to be viewed as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will. But the indispensable contribution of marriage to society transcends the feelings and momentary needs of the couple.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 66)

Marriage makes possible the continuation of the human family, the education and development of children, and the creation of a free and stable society.



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**A MAN AND WOMAN UNITED IN MARRIAGE AS HUSBAND AND WIFE SERVE AS A SYMBOL OF BOTH LIFE AND LOVE IN A WAY THAT NO OTHER RELATIONSHIP OF HUMAN PERSONS CAN. THEIRS IS A TOTAL COMMUNION OF LIFE.**

### Why does the Church insist on marriage between a man and a woman?

“Male-female complementarity is intrinsic to marriage. It is naturally ordered toward authentic union and the generation of new life. Children are meant to be the gift of the permanent and exclusive union of a husband and a wife. A child is meant to have a mother and a father.” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Marriage: Love and Life in the Divine Plan*, p. 22)

### Which public policies help parents?

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*.

# POVERTY & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## Does the Church back a specific economic model?

The Church does not back a specific economic model or technical solutions because different times call for different approaches. (St. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 43; Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 9) Rather, she insists that the dignity of the human person and the pursuit of the common good should guide all economic policies. (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 203) The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.

The Church calls on us to use all our spiritual, moral, and intellectual energies to create a new order – “a society of free work, of enterprise and of participation. Such a society is not directed against the market, but demands that the market be appropriately controlled by the forces of society and by the State, so as to guarantee that the basic needs of the whole of society are satisfied.” (St. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, 35)

“Catholic social teaching supports the right of workers to choose whether to organize, join a union, and bargain collectively, and to exercise these rights without reprisal.” (FCFC, 76)

## What is causing the growing gap between the rich and the poor?

As Pope Francis has written, “This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. ... Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 56)

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## What are the effects of consumerism?

As Pope Francis has written, “Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a ‘throw away’ culture which is now spreading. ... To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people’s pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else’s responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 53-54)

**THE DIGNITY OF EACH HUMAN PERSON AND THE PURSUIT OF THE COMMON GOOD ARE CONCERNS WHICH OUGHT TO SHAPE ALL ECONOMIC POLICIES.**

(Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 203)

## What can we do about poverty?

Jesus told us that the poor will always be with us. But this does not absolve us from our responsibility to help liberate those living in poverty. For authentic human development, it is critical to create jobs with just wages and decent working conditions; to remove barriers to employment; and to provide access to health care, food, housing, and education. Public policies should reduce dependency by helping families living in poverty strengthen their situation and find training, employment, and assistance with child care, housing, and transportation. A safety net and Social Security are needed for low- and average-wage individuals. (FCFC, 76-84) Finally, marriage is one of the best anti-poverty measures, especially for how it benefits women and children.