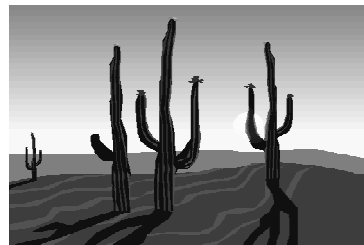


The theme for this issue is **VOTING WISELY**
Remember Catholic Social Teaching!

September/October 2008
Volume 5, Issue 3



Voice in the Wilderness

The Role of Conscience in our Lives By Tom Lenert

Do you suffer from a guilty conscience? We all have had that experience at one time or another. Why do we have feelings of guilt when we do things that go against that inner voice? Did we learn it at our mother's apron strings or in catechism classes or at school? Or is it rather like a law written somewhere deep down within our hearts that helps us recognize the difference between right and wrong? Or, maybe all of the above?

I ask the question because the Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a document in November 2007 entitled, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship. In their piece, the bishops state: "We recognize that the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a **properly formed conscience...**" (#7). The bishops go on to say that we are

called by virtue of our baptismal promises to give witness to Christ and all that He stood for. "In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation." So these are our marching orders.

How many of us take the issues facing us as a people and a nation seriously enough to examine them carefully in the light of the Gospels? Are we willing to ask ourselves what Jesus would say on the issue of war, the value of life, poverty and hunger? Do we listen to the voice of the Church when it speaks to the delicate issues of the economy, health care, immigration, the death penalty and the environment from the perspective of our Catholic faith? We are told, on the one hand, that the Church does not get involved in electoral politics by endorsing any one particular candi-

date. On the other hand however, the Church does speak to the moral issues involved. Not only does it have the right, but it has the obligation to do so, or risk failing in its moral mission to the faithful.

With the elections getting nearer, many of us are pondering conscientiously how we are going to vote. Very few people will deny that our nation stands at a critical point in our history as a nation. There are important issues at stake in this election that all of us, as responsible voters, should take into consideration, hence the importance of an informed-conscience.

Let's see if we can come up with an understanding of what conscience is and what is meant by a well-formed conscience.

It has been said repeatedly that no one candidate measures *Cont. on Pg. 6*

ELECTION 2008 By Msgr. Norm Priebe

The exercise of the right to vote deserves careful preparation. The election scheduled for November 4, 2008 is one of the most important in recent American history. The quality of our "vote" will depend upon the depth and quality of preparation we make to decide the momentous issues affecting Americans and people around the world. We can listen to the candidates and our favorite commentators. We can fall back upon our normal party affiliation. But as

conscientious Catholics, a more adequate preparation is required for the issues facing our nation and the world at the present time.

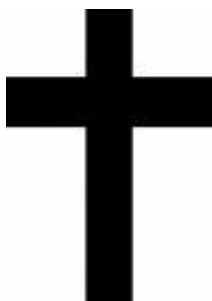
The careful formation of our conscience in Catholic moral and social teaching is something we should be busy about. The document of our bishops, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," issued in November 2007, should be on our coffee tables and near our favorite reading chair. If some question whether it is appropriate for the

Church to play a role in political life, the document states clearly: "The obligation to teach about moral values that should shape our lives, including our public lives, is central to the mission given to the Church by Jesus Christ."

Many concerned Catholics recently gathered in more than 175 groups across the United States, and in a culminating convention, to prepare a "Platform for the Common Good." This process was modeled on meetings of our nation's *Cont. on Pg. 2*

Inside this Issue:

Letter from the Editor	2
Convention for the Common Good	3
The Catholic Dilemma: How Should I Vote	4
The Economy and the Little Flower	5
Prayer for Leadership	6
Catholic Bishops: Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship	7
Environmental Corner	8



St. Jerome

Peace and Justice Ministry Magazine

5550 Thornburn St., Los Angeles, CA 90045-2141

Email: Voice.Wilderness@yahoo.com

Fax: 310-415-3577

We welcome your thoughts. Your comments should include a signature and phone number for identification. Email or mail your comments to: Readers Forum, Voice in the Wilderness, St. Jerome Rectory, at the addresses above.

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Letter from the Editor

Recently I had a conversation with a young lady named Gloria (who happened to be first-generation Korean-Canadian) from Hamilton, Ontario who was working as a volunteer at the Catholic Worker Hospitality Kitchen on skid row. Since she just graduated from college, she decided to engage in a brief period of discernment before deciding what to do with the rest of her life. She had graduated with a double degree in religious studies and political studies, so our conversation naturally gravitated towards life in general, its meaning and where this world is going. At one point, and this is the point of my story, she looked me in the eye and asked point blank, "Do you have reason to hope?" To tell the truth, for quite some time that question has been buzzing around my head like a pesky bee, which I can't seem to drive away.

Is there good reason to hope in the future? Given the intractable problems we face as a nation, as a world, nay as a planet, one has to wonder if it is not already too late to act in order to ground our hope. There is first and above all the problem of the environment; which concerns our future, that of our children and of posterity, and of life itself; then there is the troubled economy exacerbated by a several trillion dollar debt coupled with the inequitable

Pastor's Message *Cont. from Pg. 1*

founders in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787. In order "to form a more perfect Union," the founders of our nation sought "to establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity." The document produced from the recent gatherings speaks to the "Common Good" in our own time in each important area considered in 1787. It is a comprehensive and challenging document; one that should not be overlooked in preparing for this year's election. Its challenge takes voters beyond party lines and familiar positions.

Politics in our country can often be

distribution of wealth, not only in our country, but across the globe; there are multiple threats to human life ranging from unsustainable development, abortion, hunger, lack of health care, and wars on several fronts that have overextended our resources. In addition, there are major concerns with poverty, immigration, education, unemployment and housing, and there you have a fine kettle of fish. So, as responsible Catholic Christians, we have to ask ourselves in all honesty if there is reason to hope.

The answer to that question is naturally: **it depends!** Now some of us might reject the answer as a monumental lack of faith on my part. All we have to do is pray; trust in the Lord and everything is going to be OK. After all, God put us here on earth. Isn't He, as a provident God, going to be there to save us? That solution has a ring similar to the reports of those on the Titanic who, while the ship was sinking, continued to dance because the engineers had declared the ship unsinkable. The US Catholic Bishops have taken a much more positive stand in their updated quadrennial document, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.



a contest of powerful interests, partisan attacks, sound bites, and media hype. The document of our bishops instructs us: "As Catholics, we should be guided more by our moral convictions than by our attachment to a political party or interest group. When necessary, our participation should help transform the party to which we belong; we should not let the party transform us in such a way that we neglect or deny fundamental moral truths."

There are issues of great consequence awaiting our vote on November 4th: respect for human life in

The bishops are calling Catholic citizens and all people of good will to assume responsibility for this democratic nation of ours. In doing so, they are indicating that we are responsible for the future of our nation, and of the world.

Easier said than done, you say? Right on! The reason for hesitation clearly lies with us as a people who have fallen prey to the addiction of getting everything cheap with no downstream price to pay. It's similar to having our cake and eating it too. We have become dependent upon cheap goods manufactured abroad, cheap (?) oil from abroad, and now credit from abroad. We are told by our political and economic leaders that nothing is going to force us to give up our indulgent lifestyle. If you consider our \$800 billion annual trade imbalance, then it becomes clear that we have forgotten how to live within our means. Without some bold leadership that takes us in a new direction, we are not likely to make the sacrifices necessary to overcome our addictions.

With the forthcoming elections looming on the horizon at this critical time in our history, we have chosen to speak to the major issues facing the electorate from the perspective of Catholic social teaching. These issues are important not only for our nation, but for the world as well. Since we Catholics constitute 27% of the voting

Cont. on Pg. 5

its every condition; our involvement in war; glaring economic inequality; the challenges of new immigrants in our midst; the defense of marriage and family life; confronting terror and building a safer, more just, more peaceful world; confronting poverty and the lack of adequate health care and unsafe working conditions; urgent threats to the environment; the need for global cooperation and solidarity. Forming our conscience in each area of concern is an ongoing task for "faithful citizenship."

The future of our nation and our participation in the world community lies hidden in the vote of the American people on November 4th. Careful study of a "Platform for the Common Good" will help us to exercise our right to vote responsibly. ♦

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Convention for the Common Good—An Historic “Moment”

Principal article from NETWORK; adapted by Rosanne Belpedio, CSJ and Catherine Marie Kreta, CSJ

The Convention for the Common Good held in Philadelphia, July 11-13, 2008 was an amazing Event! The first ever of its kind was called together by two organizations, NETWORK and the CATHOLIC ALLIANCE for the COMMON GOOD. Network is a national Catholic social justice organization in Washington, D.C. founded by Catholic women religious; the CATHOLIC ALLIANCE is a group that defines itself as a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization formed to promote awareness of Catholic social teaching. The Convention brought together people of faith who are enlivened by the Gospel message of hope and the enlightenment of Catholic social teaching; they joined to help make our nation “a more perfect union” by creating a “Platform for the Common Good.” More than 800 delegates gathered—representing diverse backgrounds, ages, and political beliefs—to put the common good before narrow partisan agendas and find solutions to the most urgent moral issues of our times.

Since our nation’s founding, people of faith have led historic movements for social and political change. Whether the abolitionists speaking out against slavery, organizers reforming abusive labor practices, or civil activists marching to end racial segregation, faith communities have continually renewed our most cherished democratic ideals.

In these difficult times in our country today, our faith inspires us to build on our nation’s founding ideals. We have an urgent need to reclaim our role as “**We the people of the United States.**” We need to look beyond our individual wants and strive together to become more aware of the Common Good. Where poverty, violence, human trafficking, injustice or suffering exists, all of us are diminished. We seek a world where human needs are addressed and we know this can be realized only when we exercise concern both for the world today and for future generations.

Over the six months prior to the Convention, the “Platform for the Common Good” was developed step by

step beginning with conversations at the grassroots level about issues of concern to the people. Aware that the quest for the common good is both a civic obligation and requirement of our faith, some 2,000 of us gathered in more than 175 groups across the United States to discuss our nation’s current reality. We realized that we must address multiple social ills that are inextricably linked. In the end, we understood that we share a common obligation to address our interrelated challenges through sustained individual, community, business and government engagement.



From the opening session of the Convention we were encouraged to keep in mind the four “C”s: Civility, Caring, Challenge, and Curiosity. Throughout the weekend we were reminded of how the Gospel message is intertwined with the pursuit of the Common Good. We were urged to examine the “policies that affect the people.” And we witnessed a very respectful, but lively exchange between a liberal Republican and a liberal Democrat.

There were five Break-out groups: Ecology, Immigration, War/Peace, Economy, and Health Care. In our individual groups we developed a statement of concern and two questions to ask the politicians and/or their representatives, who would meet with us later in the day. It proved to be a very effective process to engage over 800 persons in stimulating dialogue and exchange with the politicians. The statements were strong and the questions challenging.

On Sunday morning we received excellent information on how to “package” our message to promote the Platform that was approved at the Convention. That was followed by a prayer service led by Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ who is well known for her work against the death penalty and is the author of the book, *Dead Man Walking*. All the participants were commissioned to go forth through this prayer as it ended with the challenge to “*Continue to guide us, O God, with your abundant grace, enlighten us with your Word, and strengthen us with your Holy Spirit as we go forth as Delegates for the Common Good.*”

Today, **We the People**, must do everything we can to create a **more perfect Union** focused on the common good by continuing to work together—as government, business, communities, and individuals—to create a nation and world rooted in justice. We must speak, act, insist, demand and ensure that the Common Good is at the heart of all decisions and actions. These times call for renewed engagement across our differences. Political engagement is not just our right, but our responsibility.

We commit to engaging this “Platform for the Common Good.” We will use it as an educational tool in the pre-election process, as a yardstick for measuring candidates and making our choices on November 4, 2008, and most importantly, as an accountability measure after the election. It is this continued engagement that will lead to true change. By working for the principles contained in this “Platform for the Common Good,” we will become the country that we say we are, authentically affirming what our founders wrote with pride: *We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common Defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our posterity do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.* ♦

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Small Thoughts on a Big Subject “The Catholic Dilemma: How Should I Vote?”

By Patricia Nolcox

“The Catholic Dilemma: How Should I Vote?” is the title of an article written by Timothy O’Connell, Ph.D., for the Oct., 2004, edition of the *Liguorian*. In his article, Dr. O’Connell uses the imagery of one’s walking into a voting booth, facing a long list of names, a collection of propositions, an endless array of alternatives and feeling alone and confused. But we are not alone, he says. As Catholics we come from a long and thoughtful faith filled tradition where questions of citizenship have never been far away. When questioned by the Pharisees on issues of citizenship and duty to God, Jesus responded, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God, the things that are God’s”. Mk 12:17. If this answer doesn’t exactly solve all things for us, it does show that these questions must be faced. People have long wrestled with the challenges of citizenship, reflecting on the demands of faith as we live in the everyday world.

Much wisdom has arisen along the way. We are really not alone in the voting booth. We have a tradition with us, a tradition that can help, only if we allow it. This tradition speaks to us of three things. It speaks of commitment, conflict and conscience.

We live in a nation that is religiously neutral, and we value that arrangement. What then is our responsibility when we move into the secular arena, into the realm of politics? The Second Vatican Council gave the answer in its landmark “Declaration on Religious Liberty.” A nation that assumes a posture of neutrality with regard to religion is not a nation settling for second best. It is a nation that understands that freedom is itself a good.

The Church, on its own terms, affirms the value of leaving all persons, Catholic and others alike, free to reach out to God in the ways they think best. Commitment encourages us to decide what we believe. Embrace your faith and make it yours with all your heart, expressing your beliefs without apology. Let your commitment to Jesus, to his gospel, be evident in every locale. Separation of church and state does not mean separation of faith and citizenship. If there are two convictions that emanate from Jesus’ teachings they are: All human beings compose a single family. There is no “we” and “they; there is simply “we”. We believe in our communal nature and in our responsibility to look out for one another. Secondly, we believe that our care for one another in the human community demands particular concern for those most in need, the poor, the vulnerable, the defenseless, those at the beginning and end of life.

Our tradition also speaks of conflict. Conflict comes from many sources. It comes from differing opinions, but it also comes from a deeper truth that in our created world we are constantly choosing among mutually exclusive alternatives. Most of the alternatives are less than ideal. We live in a finite world where values inevitably conflict. We may be able to do anything, but we cannot do everything. The challenge then, in the moment of choice, is to do as much good as possible. Saint Alphonsus Liguori believed that while our convictions may be clear, the actions that will best

embody these convictions are not. Conflict is inevitable. As a result, prudence is essential. But whose prudence?

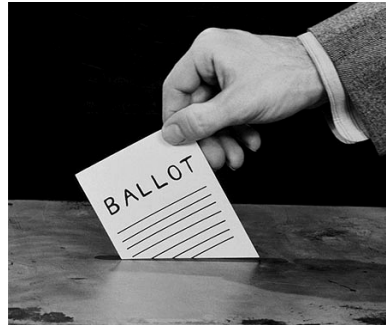
Our tradition speaks to us of conscience. As we stand in the voting booth, each of us has to make choices. No one can make them for us; no one should dare try. That each of us must

decide for ourselves is not only a right, but a fact. It is a fact that should be respected. When it comes to the question of selecting the concrete actions and particular candidates who will best serve our core commitments in a world of conflict, only the

individual conscience can decide. A useful resource that could aid in this decision is the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops document: “Faithful Citizenship: Principles and Strategies to Serve the Common Good”. (Reviewed elsewhere in this issue).

Saint Paul affirmed the supremacy of individual conscience in his First Letter to the Corinthians, when he reminded his readers that our salvation will depend on our doing what we believe to be right. (1Cor.10 23-30) The Catholic tradition has reaffirmed Paul’s teaching on many occasions.

As we stand in the voting booth, we are not alone. We are strengthened by a wonderful tradition and as Timothy O’Connell says, “in that strength, in that wisdom, pray—and mark your ballot! ♦



Some Questions Catholics Should Ask the Candidates

On Global Warming and the Environment:

(Inspired by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns)

What plans do you have for the development of alternative sources of energy beyond dependence upon oil?

On a Fair and Sustainable Economy:

What specific plans do you have to reduce the influence of corporate power on public policies and reduce poverty in the nation?

On Immigration: What would comprehensive immigration reform look like in your administration?

On Health Care: How would you address the issue of health care for all those without health insurance in the U. S.?

On Peace and Security: What are your plans for a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

On Joblessness: How will you address the overwhelming number of jobless and provide good living wages to the working poor?

On World Food Crisis: What will you do to address the looming food crisis facing nations across the globe?

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Editor's Letter *Cont. from Pg. 2*

public, it is incumbent upon us to bring our Faith perspective into the public arena so that we can exercise our representative voices in these elections.

We of the Voice in the Wilderness commit ourselves to be as **impartial and non-partisan** as we can, given the restraints of the gospel teaching as handed down by the Church. We cannot deviate from the values of Jesus. The example and words of his life will act as our guide. Then there is Church teaching, which adapts Jesus' message to the changing context of the times. Without the guidance of Church teaching in interpreting the gospel, we will remain stranded in abstract principles. To this end, we will provide a summary and analysis of the US Catholic Bishops' document, Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, which was issued in November 2007.

The principles of Catholic social teaching are often perceived as

impractical, unrealistic and abstract statements of principle by some in our community and are thus summarily dismissed. An outrageous example of this kind of thinking is the write-off of universal health care as economically infeasible. However, if we take the principles of Catholic social teaching as seriously as we should, they will become norms governing our political decisions. Common sense and the Common Good oblige us to ask why the present system cannot be changed to provide a better life for all. The answer to a person of faith is 'why not?' I am reminded of Bobby Kennedy's famous saying, "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?" As Catholics who profess an uncompromising commitment to life, we must confront the issues head-on and ask why these God-given rights cannot be realized. The same questions can be asked about immigration, inequitable distribution of wealth, the economy and

the other major issues facing us as a nation.

Albert Camus, the famous French existentialist writer, was a professed atheist. After the Second World War, he was asked by a monastery of French Dominicans to share his thoughts on the response of the Church to the war. He responded as follows, "What the world expects of Christians is that Christians should speak out, loud and clear, and that they should voice their condemnation in such a way that never a doubt, never the slightest doubt, could rise in the heart of the simplest man. That they should get away from abstraction and confront the blood-stained face history has taken on today." These remarks were made in obvious reference to the silence of the Christians in face of the Nazi atrocities carried out in their midst.

For Catholics today, silence is not an option. We must be informed and we must speak out. Other articles in this issue will address specific issues. ♦

The Economy and The Little Flower By Joan Albano

In this pre-election issue, I have been asked to write about the economy, what the Iraq war has done to it, and the increasing divide between the "haves" and "have-nots". I am not a pundit on any of these matters. I am just a Catholic wife and mother who feels the increase in our health care, grocery and gas expenses. I feel less financially secure and optimistic than I did several years ago. I often wonder what less fortunate mothers suffer during times like these, trying to feed their kids and get them to the doctor.

Sometimes I feel like a "have-not"—I see the rich getting richer, and it's not me, despite my hard work, penny-pinching and coupon clipping. Then I give myself a proverbial slap in the face, recalling that my standard of living is higher than most of the rest of the world. I suppose the first step in forming conscience is to acknowledge ourselves as "the haves". Many of my friends bemoan their difficult financial circumstances. But consider this: Do you have access to decent health care? Do you eat three meals a day? Do you

have a place to lay your head at night, a television, a refrigerator, a microwave, electronic gadgets like iPods, cell phones, Wiis, cable TV? If so, then you are a "have".

While some of us may not feel like we're getting richer, the "have-nots" in the US spend 30% of their income just on food. In developing countries it's as much as 75%. The "have-nots" are now deciding whether to buy food or medicine, and are drastically increasing the lines at food banks.

In deciding how I will vote, I will consider my family's needs, but I will also remember others who cannot possibly "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" because they are being actively exploited and ignored. I will consider the "have-nots" in the US and abroad. This is in keeping with the church's Option for the Poor, which can be understood as stated in Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States:

"While the common good embraces everyone, those who are weak,

vulnerable, and most in need deserve preferential concern. **A basic moral test for our society is how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst.**"

"Rights should be understood and exercised in a moral framework rooted in the dignity of the human person."

The U.S Bishops' Pastoral Letter, Economic Justice for All, #16 states, "This 'option for the poor' does not mean pitting one group against another, but rather, strengthening the whole community by assisting those who are most vulnerable."

It seems to me that, to exercise the Option for the Poor, I must lower my standard of living and possibly sacrifice some financial security in order to help others and create a more Christian world. I'll say it—that idea makes me uncomfortable. Isn't it the American way to work hard, earn, save for retirement and then be done with all that silliness? On the other hand did I really *earn* this comfortable lifestyle, as I like to think? Somehow that almost means I *deserve* it, right? And even if I did earn

Cont. on Pg. 8

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Role of Conscience *Cont. from Pg. 1*

up to the strict criteria of Catholic teaching. For the conscientious Catholic, then, it comes down to the exercise of that wondrous faculty, that all of us possess, called 'conscience.' The Church calls us in Forming Consciences... to participate in "political engagement: one shaped by moral convictions of *well-formed consciences* and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and vulnerable" (#13).

But, before we go on, we must return to the question we asked earlier: "What is *conscience*?" A short answer is 'Conscience is the ultimate norm of morality.' There are several distinctions that can be made, but let us stick with the latest in Church teaching. In the last document of Vatican II, The Church in the Modern World, we find conscience expressed as "man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depth." It is there that "man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey..." (GS #16).

Likewise in Vatican II, The Declaration on Religious Liberty gives us a slightly different take when it states, "It is through his conscience that man sees and recognizes the demands of the divine law. He is bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all his activity... Therefore, he must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience" (DH #3).

At this juncture, I will string together a list of the latest statements of the

magisterium on conscience, which can be found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC, 1994), so that we can understand what is meant by a 'well-formed conscience.' Most Catholics are aware of the responsibility to carefully take into consideration the law of God as manifested in the teaching authority of the church, which is the authentic interpreter of divine law. "Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened... The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings" (CCC #1783).



When a person has conscientiously studied Church teaching, the time for personal discernment has come. "When he listens to his conscience, the prudent man hears God speaking." This process of discernment ends in "a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a

concrete act he is going to perform" (CCC #1777). "A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience" (CCC #1790). In the final analysis, one's conscience is the ultimate norm of morality for the individual.

We are now in a position to ask ourselves: What are the most important factors in making conscientious decisions? Is it the act itself that is good or bad? Do the intentions behind the act play a role in the morality of the act? What role do circumstances or the consequences of the act play? In the abstract, the act itself may be seen as immoral, but since the intention, circumstances and consequences all influence the moral nature of the act, its morality may in fact change. Thus, when applied to the particular context of an act, the abstract morality can be affected. For example, we all know from our catechism days that it is wrong to kill, but when someone is threatening to take our life, the situation changes. If universal norms were to govern every individual case, there would be no need for conscience. Indeed, intention, circumstances and consequences do affect the very morality of the act. From a personalist moral perspective, the moral authority of the individual conscience is restored when the final choice is made by the prudent judgment of the person.

It would be desirable for all Catholics to read the bishops' entire document, Forming Consciences for Responsible Citizenship. For sake of brevity, let me quote several passages *Cont. on Pg. 7*

Prayer for Leadership Sr. Joan Chittister, OSB

"Give us, O God, leaders whose hearts are large enough to match the breadth of our own souls and give us souls strong enough to follow leaders of vision and wisdom.

In seeking a leader, let us seek more than development of ourselves - though development we hope for - more than security for our own land - though security we need - more than satisfaction for our wants - though many things we desire.

Give us hearts to choose the leader who will work with other leaders to

bring safety to the whole world.

Give us leaders who lead this nation to virtue without seeking to impose our kind of virtue on the virtue of others.

Give us government that provides for the advancement of this country without taking resources from others to achieve it.

Give us insight enough for ourselves to choose as leaders those who can tell strength from power, growth from greed, leadership from dominance, and real greatness from the trappings of grandiosity.

We trust you, Great God, to open our hearts to learn from those to whom you speak in different tongues and to respect the life and words of those to whom you entrusted the good of the other parts of the globe.

We beg you, Great God, give us vision as a people to know where global leadership truly lies, to pursue it diligently, to require it to protect human rights for everyone everywhere.

We ask these things, Great God with minds open to your word and hearts that trust in your eternal care. **Amen!"** ♦

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Role of Conscience *Cont. from Pg. 6*

of particular importance in the bishops' statement: "Catholics often face difficult choices about how to vote. This is why it is so important to vote according to a well-formed conscience that perceives the proper relationship among moral goods" (#34). "A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who takes a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, such as abortion or racism, **if the voter's intent is to support that position ...**" (#35). Note the modifying phrase, "If the voter's intent is to support that position." That is followed by an explanation. "There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position may decide to vote for that candidate **for other morally grave reasons...**" (#35). He "...may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods" (#36). "In making these

decisions, it is essential for Catholics to be guided by a well-formed conscience that recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that the moral obligation to oppose intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching" (#37). It is particularly important to read the Bishops' statement, beginning on page 10 or #31 "Making Moral Choices."

In conclusion, a person is only partially correct when he says that the Church recommends voting for the candidate who stands for the lesser of two evils; he is wrong when he infers that the Catholic Church sees the lesser evil in any one particular party. The Church encourages the voter to balance all the issues against one another and

then to make a conscientious (well-informed) judgment as to which candidate in the final analysis approximates the best moral position.

The bishops admittedly are obliged to walk a moral tightrope, but in any event, if you read the document, you will see that the bishops call upon the Catholic voter to consider all the issues of Catholic social teaching before making prudent judgments that require difficult soul-searching effort.

Note well these two repeated entries.

- Conscience in another sense relates to the practical application of principles when a person exercises prudent judgment to decide how to act in a particular case. "Conscience is a judgment of reason where by the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform" (CCC #1778).
- "A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience" (CCC #1790). ♦

Catholic Bishops: "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" By Alice Logrip

An in-depth statement on politics and elections, issued every 4 years by the American Bishops (USCCB), this year is entitled **Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility From the Catholic Bishops of the United States**. Their "call" is for political involvement by all persons—voters, candidates, party affiliates, and non-affiliates. They should all be "shaped by the moral convictions of well-formed consciences and focused on the dignity of every human being, the pursuit of the common good, and the protection of the weak and the vulnerable." The bishops are not trying to tell Catholics for whom they should or should not vote, but rather they are trying to help them "form their consciences in accordance with God's truth." This statement, approved by the entire group of American bishops, is cited by other articles in this issue and is highly recommended reading in preparation for November's election.

In section III. Goals for Political Life: Challenges for Citizens, Candidates, and Public Officials, the bishops propose 10 goals that "can help voters

and candidates act on ethical principles rather than particular interests and partisan allegiances." These include:

1. Protecting the weakest among us—the unborn—by restricting and bringing an end to abortion;
2. Working against our nation's tendency to use violence to solve problems, such as abortions for unwanted pregnancies, euthanasia for burdens of illness or disability, the death penalty to combat crime and waging war to settle international disputes.
3. Providing support for marriage and family life, helping parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility.
4. Seeking comprehensive immigration reform, fair treatment of immigrants, and determining why people are compelled to leave their own countries.
5. Helping to overcome poverty: ensuring access to quality education, to fair and living wages, while addressing widespread hunger and poverty around the world

6. Providing comprehensive health care to all, while respecting human dignity, life and religious freedom throughout the system.
7. Opposing all forms of discrimination
8. Encouraging cooperation among families, community groups and government to end poverty, seek the common good and care for the environment, while respecting religious groups and their right to bring moral convictions to bear on social problems.
9. Limiting the use of military force based on moral limits, and seeking a "responsible end" to the war in Iraq.
10. Joining with others in the pursuit of peace, religious liberty, human rights, economic justice and care for creation.

In summary, the bishops state that: "Our focus is not on party affiliation, ideology, economics or even competence and capacity to perform duties, as important as such issues are. Rather, we focus on what protects or threatens human life and dignity." This should be our focus as well! ♦

Voice in the Wilderness: *Voting Wisely...*

Environmental Corner

By Jacqueline Welsh

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Whichever candidate we vote for in November, these are questions we need to ask them, and for that matter, OURSELVES.

Has either candidate addressed global warming, alternate fuel, peak oil, reduction in consumerism? Or have we contributed to the problem? It's time to ask the politicians if they listen to climate scientists (Union of Concerned Scientist) instead of the diluted recommendations of unsustainable globalized businesses. Since global warming is making headlines, many corporations and businesses are jumping on the bandwagon to invest in high-tech devices, or more “green consumer items.” In turn, are we, in our personal lives, more conscientious of our consuming ways or are we too much in love with the material things of this earth?

Another question we need to address

is, “Will you, as president, work with other nations and get this country on board serious and binding international agreements to cut global emissions?” How are we at home? Have we carpooled lately? Or, for that matter, ridden a bicycle (less than a mile distance) to a store for that one item? Have we made a serious attempt in cutting off power when not in use, switching to solar products, or using compact florescent light bulbs?

Has our future president mentioned that we, as a country, need to “power down”, meaning less oil, gas, electricity, less batteries, to 20-30% less of what we have been accustomed, in other words, a decrease of 70-80%. Change will not be easy, but if we don't start paying attention now, then when will we? Our complacent and convenient lifestyle has taken a toll, when will we wake up? When will we let our leaders know they need to take action?

How about our water usage? Have we installed low-flow showerheads, taken shorter showers, or as we wash dishes, do we visualize the women in third world countries walking 3 miles to get

water, or have we put those thoughts out of our heads?

“We must begin now to move toward the era beyond fossil fuels.” James Hansen et al, Columbia University.

Peak oil is the term for the end of cheap oil. The end of cheap oil means the end of massive amounts of transportation of goods, the end of lavish amounts of travel. For more data, go to, www.EnergyBulletin.net/primer. Do we still put our money into products that use a lot of fossil fuel to get to the store? How about the products/clothes we buy? Do we conscientiously think of the people who make these items and how much they get paid?

Sacrifice is the only viable answer. Simplify, Reduce, Reuse, Count your current blessings. Learn to be content with what you have right here in your immediate neighborhood. Reconnect with your community.

So many articles I've written require political action; have you taken steps to alert our senators, government officials?

“To sin by silence, when they should protest, makes cowards of men.”

Abraham Lincoln. ◆

Economy & Little Flower

Cont. from Pg. 5

it, does that mean I should keep it all to myself?

This is where St. Therese, “The Little Flower” comes in. I am already out of my comfort zone even though the facts are clear, and I need help. St. Therese de Lisieux (1873 - 1897) practiced what she called “the little way” of humility and small deeds performed with great love and trust for God, putting “holiness of life within the reach of ordinary people.” An important component of her approach was to always remain child-like toward God, her Father. She felt that even among the poor, little children are given what they need. Thus remaining a spiritual child of God, she would be always cared for by Him, and she made it her work to offer little sacrifices as she could. I rely on the example of St. Therese. In her view, I don't have to run for president, get arrested while protesting, or become a political fanatic to do God's work. I make little choices daily and after time



they amount to something. Just as each vote is just one vote, but collectively they can make war or peace.

The powerful choice that I discovered is that we can each do little things. To do our part in the upcoming elections, we can make sure our friends are registered to vote, explain some political issues to our kids, drive an elderly neighbor to the polls on election

day, inform ourselves or discuss sensitive political issues with a trusted friend or family member, or even pray and ask for guidance to participate with God's plan in this world. These are things that you and I can do today. They are not terribly difficult, but the ripple effect may be of biblical proportions.



HAPPINESS!

Doing good is the greatest happiness.

~ Chinese proverb

Some pursue happiness.

Others create it. ~ Anonymous

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor

Tom Lenert

Advisor

Msgr. Norm Priebe

Members

Frank Campagna Alice Logrip
Theresa Marcello Patricia Nolcox
Bob Quinn