

*FAITHFUL CITIZENSHIP*  
HOMILY NOTES  
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME  
6 July 2008  
*Fourth of July Weekend*  
**“Responsible Patriotism”**

**First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10**

vs. 10: “The warriors bow shall be banished, and he shall proclaim peace to the nations.”

Sacred Scripture make it clear that God desires his people to live in peace; a peace that only he can give. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, invites us to participate in his work of making peace a reality in our day.

- *Pope Paul VI’s famous words ring true for us, “If you want peace, work for justice” (“World Day of Peace Message,” January 1, 1972 as cited in Faithful Citizenship, 53; cf. also no. 67 for an enumerated list of the path to peace).<sup>1</sup>*

**Responsorial Psalm 145:1-2, 8-11, 13-14**

vv. 9-11: “The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you. Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.”

vs. 14: “The Lord lifts all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.”

The Psalm speaks of the equality of every person in God’s eyes, and of our duty to praise him in all that we do. God has a special love and care for the lowly and humble, an attitude that we too should possess.

- *The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “Those who are oppressed by poverty are the object of a preferential love on the part of the Church which, since her origin and in spite of the failings of many of her members, has not ceased to work for their relief, defense, and liberation through numerous works of charity which remain indispensable always and everywhere” (no. 2448, as cited in Faithful Citizenship, 50).*

**Second Reading: Romans 8:9, 11-13**

vs. 9: “You are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

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<sup>1</sup> “*Faithful Citizenship*” refers to the document *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States* (14 November 2007) and can be read online at [www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/FCStatement.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/faithfulcitizenship/FCStatement.pdf).

vs. 13: “For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”

The faithful are filled with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is at work in us to enlighten our hearts to the truths of faith and to form our consciences in the ways of the Spirit of the Living God. This way of the Spirit is the way to true life in Jesus Christ.

- *“What faith teaches about the dignity of the human person and about the sacredness of every human life helps us see more clearly the same truths that also come to us through the gift of human reason. At the center of these truths is respect for the dignity of every person. This is the core of Catholic moral and social teaching. Because we are people of both faith and reason, it is appropriate and necessary for us to bring this essential truth about human life and dignity to the public square. We are called to practice Christ’s commandment to ‘love one another’ (Jn 13:34). We are also called to promote the well-being of all, to share our blessings with those most in need, to defend marriage, and to protect the lives and dignity of all, especially the weak, the vulnerable, the voiceless” (Faithful Citizenship, 10).*

### **Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30**

vv. 28-29: “Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves.”

Jesus speaks of the burdens of labor – burdens that often overwhelm the poor. Christ is present with us in our struggles, and invites us to likewise be attentive to the needs of those who are struggling.

- *“The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God’s creation. Employers contribute to the common good through the services or products they provide and by creating jobs that uphold the dignity and rights of workers—to productive work, to decent and just wages, to adequate benefits and security in their old age, to the choice of whether to organize and join unions, to the opportunity for legal status for immigrant workers, to private property, and to economic initiative. Workers also have responsibilities—to provide a fair day’s work for a fair day’s pay, to treat employers and co-workers with respect, and to carry out their work in ways that contribute to the common good. Workers, employers, and unions should not only advance their own interests, but also work together to advance economic justice and the well-being of all” (Faithful Citizenship, 52).*

### **Context:**

This Sunday coincides with the celebration of our nation’s independence. It is a time to reaffirm the vision of our founding fathers, to whom a free and just society is one in which “we hold [certain] truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by

their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Let us strive to be challenged by these words and strive to live by them ever more perfectly. As Thomas Jefferson, the principle author of the *Declaration of Independence*, wrote: “The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government” (*The Writings of Thomas Jefferson* [Washington, DC: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1904], 359). Similarly, the bishops refer to the taking of innocent human life as intrinsically evil (cf. *Faithful Citizenship*, 22-24, 34-37, 42, and 90).

As citizens, we are rightly proud of our heritage and strive to uphold its ideals; this is patriotism in the best sense of the word. Civic responsibility demands that each of us be involved in the political process.

- *“As the Holy Father [...] taught in Deus Caritas Est, ‘The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful’ (no. 29). This duty is more critical than ever in today’s political environment, where Catholics may feel politically disenfranchised, sensing that no party and too few candidates fully share the Church’s comprehensive commitment to the life and dignity of every human being from conception to natural death. Yet this is not a time for retreat or discouragement; rather, it is a time for renewed engagement. Forming their consciences in accord with Catholic teaching, Catholic lay women and men can become actively involved: running for office; working within political parties; communicating their concerns and positions to elected officials; and joining diocesan social mission or advocacy networks, state Catholic conference initiatives, community organizations, and other efforts to apply authentic moral teaching in the public square. Even those who cannot vote have the right to have their voices heard on issues that affect their lives and the common good” (Faithful Citizenship, 16).*

The Church for her part takes a non-partisan position that relies upon principles, not parties.

- *“The Church is involved in the political process but is not partisan. The Church cannot champion any candidate or party. Our cause is the defense of human life and dignity and the protection of the weak and vulnerable” (Faithful Citizenship, 59). Pope Benedict XVI states that the Church “cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the fight for justice” (Deus Caritas Est, 28 as cited in Faithful Citizenship, 15).*

With four months until the national election, the Church asks her faithful to become educated about the issues and to vote responsibly.

- *“This statement highlights the role of the Church in the formation of conscience, and the corresponding moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon the Church’s teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience. With this foundation, Catholics are better able to evaluate policy positions, party platforms, and candidates’ promises and actions in light of the Gospel and the moral and social teaching of the Church in order to help build a better world” (Faithful Citizenship, 5).*
- *“Some question whether it is appropriate for the Church to play a role in political life. However, 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. Moreover, the United States Constitution protects the right of individual believers and*

*religious bodies to participate and speak out without government interference, favoritism, or discrimination. Civil law should fully recognize and protect the Church's right, obligation, and opportunities to participate in society without being forced to abandon or ignore its central moral convictions. Our nation's tradition of pluralism is enhanced, not threatened, when religious groups and people of faith bring their convictions and concerns into public life. Indeed, our Church's teaching is in accord with the foundational values that have shaped our nation's history: 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness' ” (Faithful Citizenship, 11).*