



October 12, 2020

Dear Sisters, Associates, Colleagues and Friends,

In a recent meeting of the New York and New Jersey Sisters of Charity leadership, one of the agenda items was a discussion on how we are preparing as congregations for the upcoming presidential elections. As November 3rd approaches, we all agreed that we need to continue to share resources with our sisters, associates, employees, and partners in ministry to assist with the discernment necessary for thoughtful voting and call for prayer.

In mid- September, Joseph Cardinal Tobin, C.Ss.R., participated in a panel sponsored by Boston College, Trinity College, and St. Anselm's in which he clearly stated that voting is a "sacred act." He rejected the idea that Catholics must cast their votes based on a candidate's position on a single issue.

The U.S. Bishops in their document, ***Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship 2019***, said, "In this statement, we 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. We recognize that the responsibility to make choices in political life rests with each individual in light of a properly formed conscience, and that participation goes well beyond casting a vote in a particular election." (7)

Pope Francis in his exhortation, ***Gaudete et Exsultate***, says the following:

The call to holiness requires a "firm and passionate" defense of "the innocent unborn." "Equally sacred," he further states, are "the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection." (3)

There are difficult choices to make as we approach this day. We pray for all candidates who seek public office, especially our presidential candidates, President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joseph Biden. We urge you to vote and to encourage others to vote. It is both a privilege and a duty and should not be taken lightly.

Our leadership team discussions focused on examining which of the candidates most embrace life issues from birth to death that are important to us as women religious. The lives of the many we serve depend on our responsible vote in light of Gospel values. In these closing weeks before the upcoming election, we invite you to join with others to examine the range of issues and the candidates who espouse them.

Together, let us join in prayer each day for peaceful and just elections using the prayer from LCWR:

God of all, in this year of election, in these days of discernment, IGNITE us with the fire of your love. ENFLAME our hearts with courage to embrace dialogue that transforms and truth that frees. KINDLE our

love with kindness to heal divisions and reconcile relationships. LIGHT our imaginations with insight to envision and create a world where all are one. STIR our actions with justice and peace to engage critical concerns and cherish all of life. FIRE our lives with audacity and hope to risk all for God's mission.

– Roxanne Schares, SSND

Maureen Shaughnessy, S.C.

Sister Maureen Shaughnessy, SC
General Superior, on behalf of Leadership
Sisters of Charity of St. Elizabeth

Sr. Donna Dodge

Sister Donna Dodge, SC
President, on behalf of Leadership
Sisters of Charity of New York