

and losers. A law regarding health care will either ensure that all have access to basic health care or will create more discrimination. We should not vote for a candidate, but vote for policies supported by candidates - policies in line with the Gospel. Voting our faith is not optional – it is our commitment to live up to the gift of our faith.

- Jacques Pasquier

## Vote with a Christian Conscience

In an October 10, 2016 *National Catholic Reporter* article, Tony Magliano expressed poignantly what voting with a Christian conscience entails. Here is an excerpt from the article.

*This election, throw your political affiliation out the window! But you're a loyal Democrat. Or perhaps instead, you're a loyal Republican. Never mind that. Your political affiliation is not that important. What's crucially important is your affiliation with Jesus, and your commitment to his campaign -- to his divine plan.*

*Are you voting for Jesus Christ? Oh, but Jesus is not running for election. Oh, but yes he is! Jesus is running as an unborn baby threatened by abortion, a starving child, a poor mother whose resources have run out, a war-weary desperate father with five children, a hard-working undocumented immigrant, a Christian refugee fleeing ISIS, and a Central American teenager seeking asylum from gang violence.*

*He is running as a heroin-addicted young man, a little child drinking polluted water, a lonely old woman with meager resources, a young sweatshop worker, a homeless man, a trafficked girl trapped in prostitution, and a seriously ill elderly woman informed that a physician is available to assist her in committing suicide.*

*Oh yes, Jesus is surely campaigning -- for the vulnerable and poor, for the care of creation and for peace on earth. Countless members of the human race continue to suffer from war, war preparation, poverty, hunger, starvation, homelessness, unemployment, underemployment, environmental*

*degradation, slave labor, trafficking, capital punishment, physician-assisted suicide and abortion. . . . elections are of crucial importance not only for America, but for the human race.*

Magliano recommends we read the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops guide “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” to help us in making voting decisions that are rooted in scripture and Catholic social teaching. You can access the guide at [ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/faithful-citizenship/](http://ccc.usccb.org/flipbooks/faithful-citizenship/).

In closing, Magliano leaves us with this thought: “As faithful disciples of Jesus, let us never forget that when it comes to political elections, as well as in all matters, the Gospel trumps everything!”

- Susan Masiak

## Join us...

**for a lively discussion on Voting our Faith, Saturday, June 23 at 6:30pm.** Our discussion will be led by human rights activist Kim Redigan, and will focus on Catholic Social Teachings and how they inform our lives and our voting.



Kim Redigan is a mother, teacher, nonviolence trainer, and human rights activist from Detroit, and a teacher at University of Detroit High School. She is Vice Chair of the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, works with Meta Peace Team, and is on the state council of Pax Christi Michigan, Detroit Metro Interfaith Worker Justice, and the Detroit Area Peace with Justice Network. Kim blogs on spirituality and social justice at [www.writetimeforpeace.com](http://www.writetimeforpeace.com).

“At the heart of my work is a belief in the sacred connectedness of all beings and creation itself, a fire in my belly for justice that finds resonance in the Hebrew prophets, and a social analysis that connects the dots of the evil triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism, articulated by Dr. King, recognizing that the work of undoing racism, greed and violence begins in my own heart.”

## VOTING OUR FAITH

To paraphrase Jim Wallis, editor in chief of *Sojourners*:

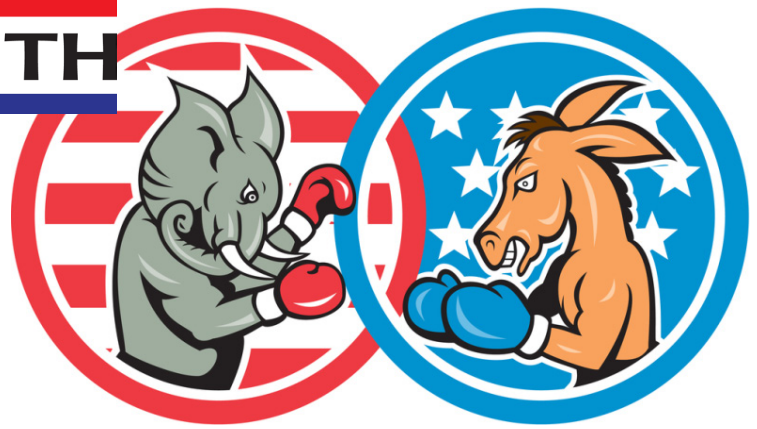
*I feel politically homeless as we enter 2018 and I know I am not alone. The values of fiscal integrity and responsibility, an allegiance to truth and honesty, genuine pro-family values, national security through global engagement, a commitment to opportunity for all and empathy for those in need, and the worth and equality of every person under the law, seem to have been lost by both parties.*

*Moral issues of intrinsic concern to the faith community are often disregarded or disrespected. The importance of marriage, family, and parenting for the common good of society is not a central topic for either party. Why is the discussion of family values among every type of family- so absent from conversations when we know it is part of critical solutions to issues of poverty?*

*Perhaps, another way – or better yet, a “moral movement” – to revive and renew American politics, on both sides of the aisle, is the way forward for people of faith who put the poor and vulnerable, the consistent dignity of human life, strong families and gender equality, and the priority of racial and economic justice and peace at the center of their political convictions.*

Perhaps, this is something to think about as we begin to investigate which candidates share our values as Christians in the upcoming 2018 mid-term elections. Maybe if we let the spirit of Jesus enter into our deliberations about which path He might take, we might be surprised with the selection.

[Time for a ‘Moral Movement’  
*Sojourners*, March 2018]  
- Sheran Tioran



### Voter Registration and Absentee Voting

To be eligible to vote in the August 7 Primary Elections you must be registered by July 9, 2018

#### Voter Registration Guidelines:

##### 1. Register in person

- A. Secretary of State office, 2250 Crooks, Rochester Hills
- B. Clerk's Office in City Administration Buildings
  - Rochester Hills – 100 Rochester Hills Dr. (off Avon)
  - Rochester – 6th Street, downtown
  - Auburn Hills – 1827 Squirrel
  - Troy – 500 West Big Beaver

- 2. Register online - go to [mi.gov](http://mi.gov) for information & form

#### Absentee Voting:

1. If registering in person and at a different address on Election Day (i.e. students) one may request a ballot be sent to the other address.
2. If registering to vote online, then when voting for the first time, one must vote in person.

- Dot Wolff

## Voting Rights in the U. S.: Then and Now

The hallmark of a democracy is each citizen's right to choose their leaders. Those who are denied this basic right are disenfranchised, their voices taken away. Sadly, disenfranchisement has been with us since the beginning of the republic.

As the original constitution did not specify who could vote, individual states regulated their own voting laws. Consequently, most Americans were disenfranchised as voting rights extended only to native-born or naturalized white male property owners. In some places, Catholic and Jewish property-owning men also were denied the vote. Those without property gradually gained voting rights by 1856, but religious restrictions remained in some states until 1870 when the 15th Amendment abolished religious discrimination. African-American men, all women, and 18-year-olds received suffrage with passage of the 14th, 19th, and 26th amendments in 1866, 1920, and 1972, respectively.

The 15th Amendment's protection of voting rights for minorities and poor people was short-lived, particularly in southern states, where backlash-generated Jim Crow laws produced de facto disenfranchisement. Poll taxes and unfair literacy tests severely limited voter registration, and Election Day abuses, such as verbal and physical intimidation, deterred participation.

In the 1960s, voting abuses were made illegal. The 24th Amendment abolished poll taxes for federal elections in 1964 and the Supreme Court banned them for state elections in 1966. Congress passed the 1965 Voting Rights Act, prohibiting literacy tests and providing federal oversight of state voting laws and investigation of discriminatory practices at the

polls. Recently, however, the Act was challenged as some states believing it was no longer necessary, passed new restrictive laws. A 2013 Supreme Court decision struck down federal oversight, thus enabling states to further limit voter access.

Today, impediments to voter access exist in 23 states, disenfranchising millions, particularly people of color, young people, low-income people, and the elderly. Restrictive laws include:

- **Voter Registration:** These range from requiring proof of citizenship to requiring many forms (15 forms in some places) to be filled out in order to register to vote with the state.
- **Voter Identification Requirements:** Restrictive photo ID laws make it prohibitively difficult for some voters. Those without a driver's license or who cannot afford to pay for one are excluded. Picture ID is not easily obtainable in some states.
- **Additional laws limiting voting:** Eliminating early voting, reducing or moving polling places, and reduction of voting hours means less access, especially for those individuals who do not drive or who are on tight schedules, balancing work, school, and family.

As stated by Sarah Johnson in Electoral Reform (May 9, 2018), "if we are truly a democratic country, we need to improve access . . . . We need to make voting something everyone can participate in."

Voters can make this happen by exercising their voices. We look forward to the day when our laws truly guarantee that no one is disenfranchised.

- Pat Kwasek



## Your Vote Matters!

Have you ever felt your vote did not matter at all? Why bother to fill out that absentee form, or stand in line at the voting booth? Certainly your one vote won't make any difference! And yet, in 1982 a state house election in Maine was decided by a margin of 1387 to 1386. In 1980 a state house election in Utah was decided by a vote of 1931 to 1930. In 1979 a state house election in Rhode Island was decided by a vote of 1760 to 1759. And in 1970 a state house race in Missouri was decided by a vote of 4819 to 4818.

More recently, and much more local, the Ecourse School District voters and the Van Dyke School District voters both turned down school bond issues by three votes each in May of 2018. The Airport District voters also turned theirs down, by a vote of 20 to 13. Yes, you read that right – only 33 people bothered to vote at all.

Your vote matters, in school board elections and primaries and general elections. Please take the time to learn about the issues and candidates and vote in August and again in November.

A proverb about why one vote and voice matters:

“Tell me the weight of a snowflake!” a blackbird asked a dove.

“Nothing more than nothing!” was the answer.

“In that case I must tell you a marvelous story” the blackbird said:

“I sat on a branch of a fir tree, close to the trunk and it began to snow, not heavily, not like a raging blizzard. No. Just as in a dream, softly without violence. Because I didn't have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. Their number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake fell on my branch – nothing more than nothing – the branch broke!” Having said that, the blackbird flew away.

The dove, since Noah's time somewhat of an authority on the matter, thought about the blackbird's story, and finally said to herself: “Perhaps there is only one person's voice lacking for peace to come about in this world...”

- Barb Staniszewski

## Voting Our Faith

In the last 40 years, in every presidential election, the “catholic vote” has been equally split between the two parties. While pollsters do not agree on the definition of “catholic vote” a recent article in the National Catholic Reporter suggested that in fact very few practicing Catholics take their faith as the first criteria to determine their vote.

Yet, what is called Catholic Social Teaching (the “best kept secret”) reminds us of the intersection between personal Faith and the reality of life – life in a community, in a nation, in a world where we are called to build the Kingdom of God. In the last seven weeks, the SJF weekly bulletin underlined and tried to explain what we know as the principles of “Catholic Social Teaching”, a moral guideline to life as a community, as a nation and world. These principles reflect the consistent role of the Church struggling to provide moral (Gospel) guidance in a world constantly facing new challenges, be it a growing economy and the disparity between rich and poor, a struggle for peace amongst nations rejecting interdependency, or communities in fear of losing their identity due to movement of populations, etc.

In a culture that tends to promote individual success, too often measured by job titles, size of houses or the use of the latest technology, how do we live up to our call to promote the vision that Jesus embodies for us in the sermon on the mountain? The Beatitudes is not a vision of the hereafter but the vision of God's kingdom to be realized in the here and now – a world of equality, of peace, of mercy. In his last document, Pope Francis reminds us that the call to holiness while deeply personal (one's conscience) does not come to us and is not fulfilled in isolation. We are called together and realize the fullness of the call together.

The common good, this vision presented to us in the Beatitudes is realized through one's effort as well as through private and public institutions, through policies that will embody God's vision for us. Faithful Citizenship, the call of the U.S. Bishops to Catholics is to actualize the “kingdom of God” in the here and now. The candidates we vote for will be responsible for decisions and policies that will either promote Gospel values or will hinder this vision of God's Kingdom. A tax policy will promote equality or will continue to promote winners