



BY FAX

October 30, 2012

Dear Pastor or Parish Administrator:

We realize that, as a pastor, you recognize how divisive partisan politics can be to a parish community. We want to make sure that you are aware of how political partisanship in parishes is personally affecting Catholics this election and offer some suggestion as to what you can do in the final week of the campaign to prevent partisan politicking in your parish.

In the past year, Catholic Democrats has heard from many Catholics around the country, and across the Bay State, who have shared troubling stories like this:

I am a lifelong Catholic who attended Catholic schools and college. I am a Democrat because I am a Catholic and I worship at a parish where I hear and see partisan political messages that I haven't experienced before. They are alienating and make me feel unwelcome at Mass. I don't know what to do. Can you help me?

As a fellow Catholic, I am writing you on behalf of the 60% to 70% (according to Pew Forum polls) of our Catholic sisters and brothers – including Democrats, Independents, *and* Republicans – who feel that politics and candidate endorsements, however subtle, should be kept out of our parishes.

Helping the poor and our belief that Jesus is present in the Eucharist are among the two most important factors that animate the Catholic identity in daily life. When partisan politics finds its way into our spiritual homes, particularly during Mass, it divides Catholics from one another at the precise time when we are called to community in Christ.

Our Catholic tradition calls us to bring both our faith and reason to bear on the moral issues of our time. We do this through our prayerfully informed conscience, our understanding of the Catholic tradition, and by applying our own prudential judgment to moral issues, including our voting decisions. Unfortunately, too often and with increasing frequency over the past decade, we have witnessed our parishes become spiritual-political battlegrounds. The consequences of this are debilitating not only to the future of our Church but also to the future of our nation.

As we enter the final days before this election, we ask that you help keep your parish free of partisan political activities and messages. Here are some practical suggestions:

- Print the following United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) recommended announcement in a prominent place in your parish bulletin on November 4, 2012:

We strongly urge all parishioners to register, to become informed on key issues, and to vote. The Church does not support or oppose any candidate, but seeks to

focus attention on the moral and human dimensions of issues. We do not authorize the distribution of partisan political materials on parish property. See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/dos-and-donts-guidelines-during-election-season.cfm>.

- If you want to distribute some material, print the recommended USCCB bulletin insert for “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” in your parish bulletin. For a printable copy, see <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/Forming-Consciences-Faithful-Citizenship-bulletin-insert.pdf>.
- Instruct parish employees, ushers and/or other parishioners to immediately remove unauthorized pamphlets and handouts within the church and on church property, including the parish parking lot. Empower them to tell people leafleting cars on church property to leave immediately or the police will be notified.
- You and the parish staff may also want to familiarize yourself with the USCCB’s parish guidelines for “Do’s and Dont’s” during an election season. See <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/dos-and-donts-guidelines-during-election-season.cfm>.

Father, we know that being a pastor is one of the toughest jobs in the world and we regret the burden the election season is putting on you. However, we sincerely believe that these suggested measures will protect the bond of Catholic faith that unites us as one in Christ.

Peace,



Steven A. Krueger
President

cc Parish Staff