

**PEOPLE YOU WANT TO KNOW.
NEWS YOU NEED TO KNOW.**

**SERVING THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF SAN ANTONIO SINCE 1892**

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

HOME

IN THIS ISSUE

COLUMNISTS

ARCHIVES

ABOUT US

SUBSCRIBE

ADVERTISE



Archbishop José H. Gomez

The 'Catholic vote'

Numerous analysts and experts have tried, in recent elections, to “decode” the “secret” of the Catholic vote. Speculation regarding what the “Catholic vote” is spans the entire spectrum of possibilities: some indicate that such a vote simply does not exist; others believe, however, that it is decisive in determining the outcome of an election.

For us Catholics, the “Catholic vote” holds no mystery: it consists of the fact that Catholics participate fully in democratic life, without leaving their Catholic identity outside the voting booth. Participation in democratic life, especially through the vote, but also through various channels of expression that our system allows, is the responsibility of every Catholic.

Why? Because, as people of faith, we believe both in the need to build a just society and in the supernatural destiny of the human person. This conviction naturally impels us to the building of the common good.

The Compendium of the Catechism explains that “the common good” is understood as “the sum total of those conditions of social life which allow people as groups and as individuals to reach their proper fulfillment.” (Compendium 407)

According to the Social Doctrine of the Church, the common good is more than the wellbeing of

isolated individuals: it involves respecting and promoting the fundamental rights of the person, developing the spiritual and temporal goods of the person and society, and the peace and security of everyone.

As The Compendium of the Catechism explains, “all men and women according to the place and role that they occupy participate in promoting the common good by respecting just laws and taking charge of the areas for which they have personal responsibility such as the care of their own family and the commitment to their own work. Citizens also should take an active part in public life as far as possible.” (Compendium 410)

This doctrine of the Catechism involves three very practical things:

First, the common good is built not only in the public sphere; it is built especially in the “micro-environment” of our daily life: the family and the community.

Second, we are called to respect, and have others respect, the law and the moral good in the areas where we work. It is not necessary to be a great businessman, a politician, or an “influential person” to respect the law and contribute to the improvement of social life.

Third, Catholics should endeavor to participate, as far as possible, in the process of electing their authorities. A responsible Catholic is a voting citizen... voting according to his conscience, enlightened by what our beloved Pope John Paul II described as the “two wings” with which human thought flies: faith and reason.

When voting, we Catholics should be guided by these two wings of thought, and especially recall the message of respect for life: that all men enjoy equal dignity and fundamental rights, from conception to their natural end.

The awareness of the inalienable dignity of every human being must also move us to act politically in such a way as to help eradicate economic inequalities and social ills affecting thousands of our brothers and sisters who live in conditions that are in stark contrast to the Gospel.

These differences not only encourage us, but also force us to live as active members of our society, in every area, including our political participation, promoting absolute respect for the life and dignity of every human being.

These days when we celebrate the beautiful solemnity of the exaltation of the holy cross, let us ask the Lord Jesus to make the cross shine in our lives, and that through our lives it may also shine in our society as a source of love and reconciliation for all human beings.

[Home](#) | [In this issue](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Archives](#) | [About us](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Advertising](#)
© Today's Catholic Newspaper, 2004