Citizenship: Nobody Said It Would Be Easy

Election Day 2018 approaches. How many campaign messages get past robo calls solicitations is unknown, but consultants use this approach to target single-issue voters. We need be careful.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship (FCFC), is a 51-page practical guide worth reading when preparing to vote.

The bishops highlight the voting “decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching.” The guide emphasizes the “...dignity of the human person, as discovered by reason and confirmed by revelation, (to) be at the forefront of all political considerations.”

For Catholics, Evangelicals, Muslims and those of other faiths, some issues, such as abortion, are not single-issue voters.

A Russian proverb says, “A full stomach likes... holding our noses and swallowing for us to preach about fasting.” As Paul Revere and the Raiders once sang, “Too much talk and not enough action” for hundreds of the people of our area who daily go to sleep hungry and wake up hungry.

Disparities between rich and poor lead to violence and declining educational achievements. Unlike abortion and racism, however, it is not usually a personal choice.

Hunger haunts our country. Poverty is a doorway to disease, substandard housing, education and safety for all the people of our area who plan for bigger crowds for meals this Thanksgiving. Employed people generally do not look for a meal at a shelter, church or community center to celebrate holidays.

Justice, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. But advocating for justice means eliminating human trafficking, fittingly labeled “a crime against humanity,” by Pope Francis, and ending the scourge of domestic violence. It also means welcoming the stranger seeking work, and affording opportunities for housing, education and safety for the marginalized.

Elections sometimes require holding our noses and swallowing hard while voting for someone with whom we ardently disagree on one issue in order to struggle against others that are also intrinsically immoral. As with other choices Catholics make, we vote “guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching,” with no single political position sufficient to guarantee a Catholic voter’s support or opposition.

Nobody ever guaranteed this would be easy. Nobody ever guaranteed this would be easy. It Looks Like This

BY KEVIN PERROTTA
Catholic News Service

W hat does it mean to have faith in Jesus? What is this having faith in Him?

It’s possible to answer these questions in an abstract way, with carefully defined terms in a theological discussion — possible, and useful. But we also need something more vital: a living demonstration.

That is what St. Mark gives us in today’s Gospel. In effect, he says, “You want to see what faith in Jesus means? Well, I’ll show you.”

Mark tells a story of a man who is destitute. Bartimaeus has nothing, frankly, but his underwear and a dirty old cloak. Nothing. He is blind, which prevents him from working. Family and friends are no help. So he sits on the street and begs.

One day, as he is sitting there, he hears a crowd gathering. People are saying that Jesus of Nazareth is coming. Bartimaeus has heard about Jesus before, and now, suddenly, a thought occurs to him: Jesus can restore my sight.

Without a second thought, he starts trying to get to Jesus. Because of the crowd and his disability, he simply yells Jesus’ name over and over, insistently, desperately. This is his only chance to see again. He’s not going to let it go. “Jesus! Jesus!” he cries out.

People standing near him try to make him stop. “Shut up, you heap of garbage.” But he won’t be stopped. The conviction that Jesus can heal him is too strong. “Jesus! Jesus!” he shouts.

Finally Jesus hears him. He pauses and asks, “What do you want me to do for you?”

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Finally Jesus hears him. He pauses and asks someone to fetch the man. Bartimaeus jumps up, leaving his cloak (his only possession) behind, and comes. Jesus asks him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Bartimaeus answers, “Master, I want to see.”

Jesus restores his sight. There, Mark says. That is having faith in Jesus.

Each of us is left to ponder this demonstration. Various elements of the story may have particular significance for different ones of us.

Am I any less destitute than Bartimaeus? Do I experience within me the gift, the inspiration, of faith in Jesus’ power to save me?

What social pressure am I willing to break through to get to Jesus? Am I willing to let go of everything I have to receive what I need from Him?

If Jesus’ question is, “What do you want me to do for you?” what’s my answer?

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Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or, abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

— The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution