



# Canada's Federal Election and the Catholic Church:

## *Educate, Reflect, Act*

### **HUMAN DIGNITY FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF LIFE**

As Catholics, we believe that the life and dignity of every person must be respected and protected at every stage and in every condition. Life itself is the first and most basic human right. We want to elect governments that actively work to shape a world where human life receives full respect at all stages and that show their commitment to justice and peace.

That means electing governments that will abide by the freedoms of conscience and religion found in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter is intended to protect all of us as citizens from being coerced or intimidated into taking action that goes against our conscience and our faith.

*MORE ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY ON REVERSE*

### **FACTS**

- 94,030 abortions were performed in Canada in 2017. Almost 15% of them occurred at 13 weeks of pregnancy or later.
- About 8,000 Canadians chose medically-assisted suicide since its legalization.
- Only 15% of Canadians who died in 2016–17 received palliative care at home; research shows that 89% could benefit from palliative care in the final year of their life.



### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION BEFORE YOU VOTE ON OCTOBER 21, 2019:**

- Since Canada doesn't have an abortion law and physician-assisted suicide is legal, which party will best protect the sanctity of life from conception to natural death?
- Who has a plan to protect the conscience rights of medical professionals who reject physician-assisted suicide and cannot perform or refer the procedure?
- How can the Canadian government make palliative care accessible to all who need it?

## FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END OF LIFE

Critical life issues are intimately linked with issues affecting the poor, marginalized and vulnerable in our communities:

- **From conception to natural death:** Just as children are to be protected from the moment of conception, those who are at the end of their lives also deserve care so their passing from this world to the next is marked by dignity and respect. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision to strike down the laws against assisted suicide continues to challenge us. The conscience rights of physicians and health professionals who choose not to participate in the intentional killing of a patient need defending. Responding in a positive and caring way to soothe the fear and anguish people may experience at the end of their lives – such as feeling pressured to accept death sooner to avoid a presumed financial burden on their family and others – is one way to support life.
- **The poor and marginalized:** In “A Church Seeking Justice,” Canada's Catholic Bishops stated that as Catholics, we must be committed to work in service and solidarity with the poor and marginalized. Electing governments that respect and safeguard human dignity is part of that call.
- **Palliative care, long-term care and home care:** Canada's Bishops have advocated for making high-quality palliative care, long-term care and home care easily accessible to all Canadians. The energies and resources of our elected representatives are to be directed toward this goal.

A consistent ethic of life is needed. A respect for life issues includes not only critical life issues such as abortion and assisted suicide, but also a genuine commitment to life. It is up to us to gauge the various political parties' responses when it comes to:

- improving health care
- reducing poverty
- providing quality education
- creating adequate, accessible, affordable housing, and
- offering other social supports

Want to attend a debate with 1,000 Catholics or learn more about other issues leading up to the October 21, 2019 election? Visit [www.archtoronto.org/election](http://www.archtoronto.org/election) for more details.

## OUR SOCIAL TEACHING TELLS US...

“The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies.”

—*Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel), #203*

“Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.”

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church, #2319*

“Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that every human being is a person, that is, [their] nature is endowed with intelligence and free will.”

—*Pope John XXIII, Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), #9*



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