

A Phoenix bishop's plea to voters and  
politicians:

Catholics should be consistent in public life and  
need to make protecting innocent life a serious  
political priority, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted of  
Phoenix has said in the latest edition of his  
booklet on the duties of Catholic voters and  
politicians.

The booklet “Catholics in the Public Square,”  
now in its fourth edition, makes a distinction  
between support for intrinsically evil issues and  
support for different methods of achieving  
policy.

For example, Catholics may never legitimately  
promote or vote for any law that attacks  
innocent human life,” Bishop Olmsted said,  
latter adding “being right on all the other issues  
can never justify a wrong choice on this most  
serious matter.”

The guide reiterated the need to examine one’s  
conscience and the need for Catholic politicians  
to oppose laws that allow or promote abortions.

If a politician is actively supporting and  
furthering the culture of death, he is not only  
causing scandal; he is sinning. Similarly, when  
a politician performs actions (like voting) that  
allow for abortions and even promote  
abortions, or that mandate the distribution of  
contraceptives by pharmacists and others, that  
politician is materially cooperating in grave  
sin,” the bishop’s booklet continued.

These politicians must make a sincere  
confession before receiving Holy  
Communion, he said. Because the harm they  
have done was public, they should also  
publicly make amends.

“Catholics should always be respectful of the  
human dignity of others, including people of  
different faiths, or no faith at all,” Bishop  
Olmsted said. “Having said that, however,  
Catholics should not be afraid to embrace  
their identity or to put their faith into practice  
in public life. In fact, each of the faithful has  
a call to evangelization and to share the good  
news of Christ with the rest of the world.”



The booklet, released Sept. 17, features a new  
foreword by Archbishop Jose H. Gomez of Los  
Angeles and updated material from Pope  
Francis. The new material includes excerpts  
from the Pope’s recent encyclical “Laudato Si”  
and his speeches during his trip to the United  
States.

“Bishop Olmsted wrote this booklet to better  
form Catholic lay people about their faith and  
responsibilities to their communities,” Robert  
DeFrancesco, communications director for the  
Diocese of Phoenix, told CNA Sept. 19.

“According to Bishop Olmsted, it is important  
for Catholics to reflect on their role in public  
life, because we are called to live our faith all of  
the time wherever we are and whatever we are  
doing, not just at Mass on Sundays.”

Bishop Olmsted said that Catholics are  
specially called “to contribute to the common  
good, to defend the dignity of every human  
person, and to live as faithful citizens.”

“It only makes sense that if Catholics are  
supposed to live their faith in all of their daily  
activities that they should also take their faith  
into account while voting,” he added.

A Catholic’s preparations to vote must include  
proper formation of conscience, followed by  
research of important issues and candidates  
that will appear on the ballot.

Archbishop Gomez’s foreword to the booklet  
also reflected on Catholics in the public arena.

“This book is a kind of ‘question and answer  
catechism’ on some of the deepest issues of  
faith and public life,” he said. The archbishop  
described the booklet as “a must-read for all of  
us who are trying to engage the culture and to  
proclaim the Church’s beautiful vision for  
human life and human society.”

“The Church needs clear and courageous  
teaching and witness to confront the idols of a  
secularized, post-Christian America,”  
Archbishop Gomez said.

Bishop Olmsted suggested that some Catholics  
have been “frightened into silence and even  
confused by charges that they are imposing  
their morality on others.”

“Of course, if one’s faith does not impact on  
one’s whole life, including one’s political and  
social responsibilities, then it is not authentic  
faith; it is a sham, a counterfeit,” he countered.