

Catholic News Agency, www.catholicnewsagency.com published the following article by Kevin Jones about Bishop Olmsted's guide.

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.