

The background of the entire cover is a close-up, slightly blurred image of the American flag. The top portion shows the blue field with white stars, while the bottom portion shows the red and white stripes. The text is overlaid on this background.

saint mary's press

FAITHFUL CITIZEN, FAITHFUL CATHOLIC

Informing Your Conscience and Your Vote

Fr. Michael J. McDermott

**FAITHFUL CITIZEN,
FAITHFUL CATHOLIC**

FAITHFUL CITIZEN, FAITHFUL CATHOLIC

Informing Your Conscience and Your Vote

Fr. Michael J. McDermott



saint mary's press

Dedication

To my parents, John and Jean, who first taught me what it means to be among you as one who serves.

The publishing team included Steven C. McGlaun, development editor; Lorraine Kilmartin, reviewer; iStockphoto / Nicholas Monu, cover photo; prepress and manufacturing coordinated by the production departments of Saint Mary's Press.

Copyright © 2007 by Fr. Michael J. McDermott. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any means without the written permission of the publisher, Saint Mary's Press, Christian Brothers Publications, 702 Terrace Heights, Winona, MN 55987-1320, www.smp.org.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-0-88489-980-8

1349

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McDermott, Michael J.

Faithful citizen, faithful Catholic : informing your conscience and your vote / Michael J. McDermott.

1. Christianity and politics—Catholic Church. 2. Catholic Church—Doctrines. 3. Catholics—Political activity. I. Title.

BX1793.M36 2007

261.7088'282—dc22

2007013589

Contents

Introduction	6
Chapter 1: The Church Community	9
Growth in Virtue as an Individual and as a Member of a Community	
Informing Your Conscience	
Violence and Peace	
Promoting Peace Through Politics	
Chapter 2: You Are God's Beloved: The Dignity of the Human Person .13	
Guiding Vision	
The Family	
Beginning of Life	
End of Life	
Chapter 3: You Are God's Beloved People: The Common Good. . . . 20	
Guiding Vision	
The Common Good	
Community Challenges	
Political Issues	
Economic Issues	
Cultural Issues	
Chapter 4: Making Decisions	31
Social Teachings of the Catholic Church	
Whom to Vote For? What Ballot Issues to Vote For?	
Making Moral Decisions	
Questions and Answers	
The Long Haul	
Acknowledgments	38

Introduction

In the Steps of Jesus

Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him [Jesus], fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.

. . . Some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?” But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.” He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talithacum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!” And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. (Mark 5:22–24,35–43)

Jesus embodied God’s power to bring new life, to be a healing presence in the face of suffering and even death. He also empowered his disciples and sent them to share in his healing work.

We Are Called

“Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal” (Luke 9:1–2).

Jesus taught his disciples how to become a light that would lead others to new life, and he empowered them to do so. The Bible describes this new life as a city with a river of sparkling crystal water. On each bank of the river, trees of life grow with leaves that serve as healing medicine for the nations (see Revelation 21:1–4, 22:1–2). What does all this mean? It means God is calling each of us to become God’s partner in building up a new earth and a new city.

A World in Need of Healing

In many ways, the world we live in today is like the little girl in need of healing. We have real concerns about global warming and pollution. Wars continue to tear apart nations, cities, and families. In our world today, millions of people are suffering from natural disasters and drought. Many people find themselves without enough food, clean water, or decent shelter to keep them healthy. Many young children throughout the world are forced to work long hours to earn just a dollar or two a day. Political oppression is a reality for millions. At the root of so many ills in our world today is the failure of the human family to treat human life, especially that of the innocent and vulnerable, with the respect and dignity it deserves.

In our own country, and to some degree in your city or community, we have similar problems. Every community suffers from crime. Every city has citizens who don’t have enough to eat and who sleep outside each night. In almost every community in America, human life is destroyed through the violence of abortion.

In such a world, what is Jesus sending us to do? Can we be healers and life givers, as he was?