



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

Love One Another: Practicing Civility for the Common Good

As our country enters the 2020 presidential campaign year, we want to share with you some thoughts about practicing civility for the common good. “For all Catholics, including those seeking public office, our participation in political parties or other groups to which we may belong should be influenced by our faith, not the other way around.” (2019 introduction to [Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)). We also want to encourage you to engage respectfully with others to improve civil dialogue and our entire political system.

Our country’s political discourse has become much less civil over the last several decades to the point where there is a near paralysis in our federal government and too often at the state and local levels. There are many contributing factors and we do not want to point fingers or make accusations. There is enough blame to go around. Meanwhile, life and dignity are attacked, injustice and violence persist, and our throwaway culture afflicts the environment.

We must reverse these trends and heal our political divisions. The human suffering we witness at home and abroad urges us not to delay in our response. We must learn again how to work with people who hold different political positions and keep the pressing priorities paramount. We cannot let disagreements derail our efforts on the common good. As the Second Vatican Council confirmed, “the people who come together in the political community are many and diverse, and they have every right to prefer divergent solutions.” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 74)

Especially for us as Catholic Christians, we need to heed God’s call to be missionary disciples of Jesus. We need to follow his example in engaging with those opposed to his teaching. Jesus always offered mercy and reconciliation. While the rich young man went away sad (Mt. 19:16-22), Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his home and worked to make amends (Lk. 19:1-10).

The Bishops at the Second Vatican Council urged Catholics: “Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them” (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 28).

If we want people running for elected office to behave better, we have to start with behaving better with people we encounter who hold differing opinions than our own. We invite you to join with Catholics across the United States and join the *Civilize It* campaign by taking the pledge below as a way to promote civility, love our

neighbors, and build community. *Civilize It* is a non-partisan call to focus on the dignity of all people, even when we disagree, and to put faith in action by bearing witness to a better way forward.

I PLEDGE:

1. Civility – To recognize the human dignity of those with whom I disagree, treat others with respect, and rise above attacks when directed at me.
2. Clarity – To root my political viewpoints in the Gospel and a well-formed conscience, which involves prayer, conversation, study and listening. I will stand up for my convictions and speak out when I witness language that disparages others' dignity, while also listening and seeking to understand others' experiences.
3. Compassion – To encounter others with a tone and posture which affirms that I honor the dignity of others and invites others to do the same. I will presume others' best intentions and listen to their stories with empathy. I will strive to understand before seeking to be understood.

For resources to help you share the *Civilize It* pledge with your family, friends and parish, visit <https://www.wearesaltandlight.org/civilize-it>.

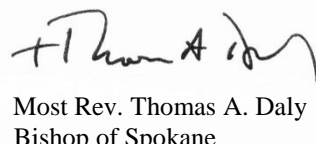
In the heart of Christ,



Most Rev. Paul D. Etienne
Archbishop of Seattle



Most Rev. Joseph J. Tyson
Bishop of Yakima



Most Rev. Thomas A. Daly
Bishop of Spokane



Most Rev. Eusebio Elizondo, M.Sp.S.
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle



Most Rev. Daniel H. Mueggenborg
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