

Becoming Spirit-Filled Voters

Our Faith & Election Day

Introduction

The principles of Catholic Social Justice are central to NETWORK's work, and have guided the choices of lay and religious people for over a hundred years. The principle calling us to participation, in particular, has special importance during an election year. Together, we will explore how this call to participation in our society and our politics should direct our actions. Inside, you will read personal stories, reflect on the wisdom of fellow justice-seekers, and be invited to contemplate how you live out the responsibility to engage in our democracy.

We call this collection of wisdom and instruction "*Becoming Spirit-Filled Voters: Our Faith and Election Day*" because we are called to think and act for the common good through our democratic systems. People of all faiths or no faith are welcomed and encouraged to learn from and live out of these beliefs to restore faith, dignity, and morality in our nation.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed to be used by individuals or groups. Following this introduction there will be six chapters, each one dedicated to how to engage with our democracy with readings, quotes, reflection questions, and a prayer. We recommend spending the season of Lent, or another 6-7 week period, working through all of the material. You may choose to divide the content into multiple days for reading and reflection, or set aside time once a week to go through a full chapter.

We encourage you to share your experience, learnings, and feedback with us over social media (@NETWORKLobby) or via email (info@networklobby.org). To join us in our advocacy while using this reflection guide or after, visit NETWORK's website at www.networklobby.org.

What Role Does NETWORK play?

NETWORK's mission and values arise out of the long and rich tradition of Catholic Social Justice. This tradition encompasses the teachings of the Church (Catholic Social Teaching), but is also broader, including the witness of all Christians and people of faith who have committed to proclaiming the love of the Gospel and the justice of God's kingdom in the public sphere. We at NETWORK are inspired by the unwavering commitment of Catholic Sisters to proclaim the good news of the Gospel in solidarity with people whose votes are at the margins of our society. Our faith teaches that we have a responsibility to participate in politics out of a concern for, and commitment to, the good of the community. This responsibility to participate means each person also has a fundamental right to participate, and must be equipped with the resources to do so with confidence.

NETWORK believes that it is our responsibility to ensure all people in our nation have access to democracy, health care, citizenship, and housing. We are called to mend the gaps through voting, advocacy, and change. Starting with our individual communities, we see disparities that can be fixed, given the proper support and policy.

Approaching Election Day with Faith and Hope

Voting is an important civic and spiritual responsibility. We are called, as people of faith and as active participants in our society, to engage fully in the process of choosing our elected representatives. Throughout this toolkit, we will pray, reflect, and act on the many dimensions of actively participating in our democracy.

Preparing Ourselves to Act for Justice and the Common Good

This is a challenging time in the United States and in much of the world. Local problems, national issues, and international crises demand our attention. It is tempting to look away and it is difficult to find hope. As people of faith, however, we cannot detach ourselves from these struggles. We are called to actively participate in politics to promote the common good, especially when it is difficult.

We know that voting is not only a civic responsibility, but a spiritual one as well. Making our voices heard through voting, emailing and calling our elected officials, participating in town hall meetings, attending protests, and going on lobby visits, is one of the best ways to create a more just society. However, our democracy is not perfect. Too many voters, particularly voters of color, are disenfranchised by discriminatory policies and excessive burdens, or have lost their right to vote entirely.

As we prepare ourselves to vote and encourage others to “get out the vote” in this upcoming election, we are mindful of the individuals and communities whose right to vote has been stripped from them. Substantive legislation has been introduced that would restore and safeguard the right to vote for all U.S. citizens, and NETWORK actively supports these efforts to mend the gaps in access to democracy.

Our nation is stronger when everyone’s voices are heard. We must protect the right to vote because, as NETWORK’s [Sister Quincy Howard, OP says](#), “In a secular democracy, voting is the closest thing we have to a sacrament.” By participating in our democracy and choosing our political leaders through elections, we show our respect for human dignity and the worth of all individuals. It is critical that we protect and promote the integrity of our votes and our elections because in doing so we protect and promote human dignity.



Free and fair elections not only respect the agency and dignity of all voters, but they are also the way we improve structures and enact policies that mend the gaps. This can happen through both ballot initiatives and by electing lawmakers who write and pass legislation that serves the 100%. When we participate in our democracy — *of the people, by the people, for the people* — we can advance the common good.

We Pray

A Hymn for a Time of National Crisis

O God of All the Nations

LLANGLOFFAN 7.6.7.6 D ("Lead On, O King Eternal"; "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers")

O God of all the nations, your ancient prophets saw
that kings and institutions are not above the law.
Integrity is precious, and truth will one day stand;
Your way is peace and justice, and love is your command.

O God, when times are troubled, when lies are seen as truth,
When power-hungry people draw praise and not reproof,
When greed is seen as greatness, when justice is abused,
We pray that those who lead us will know what they must choose.

We pray they'll gather wisdom and lift up high ideals,
To guide our struggling nation along a path that heals.
We pray they'll have the vision to value each good law,
To put aside ambition, to seek the best for all.

O God of all the nations, may those who lead us see
that justice is your blessing, that truth will set us free.
Give all of us the courage to seek the nobler way,
So in this land we cherish, the good will win the day.

Tune: Traditional Welsh melody, from Daniel Evans' Hymnau a Thonau (Hymns and Tunes), 1865 ("Lead On, O King Eternal"; "Rejoice, Rejoice, Believers")

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Take Action

1. Watch **Suppressed: The Fight for the Vote** to see how the application of several voter suppression tactics in the State of Georgia influenced the 2018 election. (37 min.)

Watch the film: www.bravenefilms.org/suppressed.

2. Browse **NETWORK's 2020 Election Toolkit** and begin to think about how you are called to engage this election season. Resources in this toolkit will prepare you to ask candidates questions at a town hall, write letters to the editor, and advocate for justice on social media.

View the toolkit: www.networkadvocates.org/2020election.