

[Readings: Deut. 6:2-6; Ps.18; Heb. 7:23-28; Mark 12:28-34]

Jesus calls us to grow; to be challenged in what the deepest meaning of life is. So what does He teach us? He teaches us what it means to be a disciple; this involves two steps.

Step One is to: *Love God first, with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength.* Jesus reveals to us who God is. God's heart is made known to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, as we hear in the Second Reading, "offered himself" for us. God loves us to such a degree that He holds nothing back from us. His love for us is radical and intense.

And because God's gift to us is limitless – *ALL of Himself* – God can ask for ALL of us: our heart – the place of our decision-making and our soul – with our eternal destination in mind. Your mind – what you fill your mind with; the study and knowledge of God! And your strength – loving God is a battle against temptation; it requires a fight!

Step Two is to: *Love your neighbor as yourself.* St. John tells us, "Whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen." (1Jn 4:20). Disciples are called to follow Jesus; to love the people He loved. And He loved everyone. Because Jesus willingly gave Himself up for others, we are called to love them in deed, as well.

With the election quickly approaching, the Michigan Catholic Conference continues its voter education efforts to urge the faithful to vote with a conscience informed by the truths of Church teaching.

To further advance this message, MCC has been sharing its election edition of Focus magazine directly with Lansing Update

readers. This edition was shared as insert in the bulletin a couple of weeks ago. A few copies are still available in the back of the church.

It can be challenging to compare Catholic teaching – which was shared in last week’s installment, and which can also be found here -- with the positions espoused by candidates for office.

Neither of the country’s two major political party platforms adhere to the full range of Catholic teaching.

Making these voting decisions is sometimes discouraging. But Catholics are called as Disciples of Christ to be a light in the world and to guide others toward the righteous path.

While it is important to spend time researching the candidates and the issues, putting on the mind of Christ before voting also necessitates stepping away from the noise through the election cycle.

Does cable news political commentary or social media discourse help inform a Catholic perspective? Take time away from media and spend time with Holy Scripture and the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off the TV and the podcast and listen in silence. Pray often, letting faith inform political participation.

The Church and this Focus publication cannot and will not tell individuals which presidential or Michigan-based candidate they should vote for.

Such decisions are to be made after forming one’s conscience based on the teachings of the Church and prayerful reflection of candidate positions.

It is up to all Catholics and people of goodwill to do the best they can to make wise judgments about the candidates and the issues.

Everything else is in God's hands.

I encourage you all to read the entirety of Focus and take advantage of the resources at MCC's election website.

And Moses spoke to the people, saying: "Fear the Lord, your God, and keep throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments... that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the Lord... to give you a land flowing with milk and honey." And Jesus replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength... And you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

May God keep us faithful to His teachings as we put His Words into action with courageous hearts and lives. May Mary, Queen of All Saints, the Immaculate Conception, may our brothers and sisters in Purgatory, and one another here present, pray together that God's will be done on Tuesday. AMEN!