

## **An Open Letter to Catholic Voters and All Voters for Justice in the United States from Women-Church Convergence, July 2020**

We greet you in the midst of a global pandemic, an economic catastrophe, and a moral emergency. We are women who lead Catholic-rooted organizations and communities. Our hearts are heavy with grief over Covid-19 illness and deaths, with the sting of unemployment and fiscal uncertainty, and especially with the weight of systemic racism and white supremacy that assure that people of color suffer all of these problems in disproportionate ways.

Our organizations struggle to support immigrants, guarantee reproductive justice, eradicate racism, gain women's and LGBTIQ rights both in church and society, model inclusive community, and nurture ecology. The need for actions beyond words sparks this missive.

As we seek to answer the hard questions about what to do next, our collective mind turns to the November 2020 elections in the United States that will have worldwide repercussions. These elections are the next significant chance we have to stem the tide of injustice and usher in a new era of equality.

Voting is a hard-won and sacred duty. We implore you to VOTE.

Let us clarify, explain, and commit to how we as progressive feminist Catholics plan to vote in November 2020.

First, we will vote on the basis of our conscience, not on the basis of Catholic clerical leaders' directives. We know full well how to vote. We do not need instruction from male clergy, especially from the all-male hierarchical, institutional leaders. Their claims to speak in the name of all Catholics are fiction and suspect when used to further a political agenda that many Catholics do not share and indeed find offensive. We do not support partisan politics in the name of our religion.

We saw the first efforts this season to garner Catholic votes when the sitting president met by telephone with Cardinal Timothy Dolan and hundreds of other Catholic officials who sought federal aid for Catholic schools. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, and other Catholics have made clear their strong disagreement with Dolan's effusive praise of the President. Virtually nothing about this administration's policies, especially on immigrants and race, is remotely related to Catholic social teaching. That any Catholic clergy would offer commendation that sounds like an endorsement is unacceptable, a source of scandal.

We also take issue with the U. S. Catholic bishops' notion that any single issue, in their case abortion, is more important than an intersectional agenda of justice concerns. Justice is of a piece with special emphasis on the needs of the most marginalized, especially women and dependent children.

We are glad that we live in a country where bishops can vote. However, we underscore that they each have but one vote and it represents their individual Catholic views, not the views of the Catholic community. We, in turn, vote on the basis of our values. We reject any suggestion that the bishops speak for the larger Catholic community and we will shine a spotlight on such bogus claims lest any confusion reign.

Second, we will vote a justice agenda, choosing candidates from President to local school board who support economic equality, who will dismantle corrupt policing practices, who favor inclusion of marginalized people of all sorts in our diverse society, and who stand for generous and welcoming immigration policies. We will vote against those whose greed and personal gain shapes their political views. We will vote to defeat those who would break ecological treaties, defund multi-national organizations that seek health and nuclear disarmament for the whole planet, and who put U.S. interests ahead of global well-being. The corona virus, the economic meltdown, and the national shame of racism and white supremacy combine to ignite a new moment of worldwide awakening: our common life must be lived justly and in peace. We intend to embody this when we cast our ballots.

Third, we will vote and work to make sure that others can vote as well. We oppose every act of voter suppression, every attempt to limit voting, and any other way that voters are disenfranchised. We urge our members to engage in local get-out-the vote efforts so that our democracy can function effectively. We will pay particular attention to the voting rights of people of color, those who were previously incarcerated, those who need help getting to the polls, and those who need a hand with their ballots. Voting is our best chance to make wholesale change. We repeat, we will vote and work to make sure that others can vote as well.

We invite you to join with all who seek to move from the depths of medical, economic, and social despair that characterize our country today to the heights of human sharing and collective flourishing. We welcome your companionship as we work humbly, but with confidence born of our Catholic feminist faith, to co-create a healthy planet and a harmonious social order. This is our commitment for November 2020 and beyond. Join us!

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**Members of Women-Church Convergence Issuing this Open Letter:**

A Critical Mass: Women Celebrating Eucharist  
Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests  
Catholics for Choice  
Catholics for Choice Canada  
Chicago Women-Church  
Greater Cincinnati Women-Church  
DignityUSA  
Mary's Pence  
Roman Catholic Womenpriests - USA  
San Francisco Bay Area Women-Church  
Sisters Against Sexism (SAS)  
South Eastern Pennsylvania Women's Ordination Conference  
Sunday's Bread Inclusive Catholic Community  
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER)  
Women's Ordination Conference