In the eyes of our faith, politics is about love writ large. Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* quoted from Pope Benedict: “We need to be convinced that charity ‘is the principle not only of micro-relationships (with friends, with family members, or within small groups) but also of macro-relationships (social, economic, and political ones).’” For Pope Francis, “An authentic faith…always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave the earth somehow better than we found it.”

In Catholic teaching, politics also is seen as the proper, but not exclusive, domain of the laity. In the words of the Second Vatican Council: “Laymen should also know that it is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the early city. …Since they have an active role to play in the whole life of the Church, laymen are not only bound to penetrate the world with a Christian spirit. They are also called to be witnesses to Christ in all things in the midst of human society.”

The role of the bishops, assisted by priests and deacons, religious and lay leaders, is to “teach fundamental moral principles that help Catholics form their consciences correctly, to provide guidance on the moral dimensions of public decisions, and to encourage the faithful to carry out their responsibilities in political life.”

What political activities are urged upon us by the Church? First, Pope Francis reminds us, “Politics, though often denigrated, remains a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good. … I beg the Lord to grant us more politicians who are genuinely disturbed by the state of society, the people, the lives of the poor!” In addition to actually running for office, the U.S. Bishops urge the following: working within political parties; communicating directly with officials; joining Church advocacy networks; participating in community organizations; and other efforts “to apply authentic moral teaching in the public square.” Then, the bishops add, “Even those who cannot vote have the right to have their voices heard on issues that affect their lives and the common good.”

**ENDNOTES**

7. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 31
10. *Evangelium Gaudium*, no. 205
11. *Forming Consciences*, no. 16.