

## **In the Heartland With Bishop Pates**

### **Voting (once again) and growing our Catholic heritage**

#### **Voting**

This too will pass! The barrage of political ads continues to annoy and there is a common yearning to finally arrive at Nov. 7 when the election will be over.

At the same time, there is a realization of the importance of this particular election. I urge, on everyone's part, a genuine effort to identify one's most deeply held values and then try to match the candidate(s) who best represent these values. This process has ended for me. Since I will be out of state on Nov. 6, I have voted early.

The process continues on for many more. Some expect the Church to identify specific candidates for whom one should vote. To do so would violate IRS regulations and risk losing tax-exempt status. Many, many others identify bundles of specific campaign literature which they insist all should read.

At the end of the day, however, I continue to believe that one exercise in preparation for the election would be invaluable. That exercise is to carefully review and answer the questions under the category "Do you support:" as found in the information published by the Iowa Catholic Conference under the title "Faithful Citizenship for Iowa Catholics." This document is available in both English and Spanish at [www.iowacatholicconference.org](http://www.iowacatholicconference.org) and also at your parish.

If one approaches these questions with integrity, a desire to be in touch with the Church's teaching and a determination to move to the common good for all in society by reliance on the natural law or self-evident truth – then I am convinced the individual discerning will come to a conclusion about voting that will truly be in accord with one's conscience and a decision that is responsive in developing a culture committed to the life and dignity of every human person.

Most important of all, exercise your right to vote and do so by Nov. 6!

#### **Growing our Catholic heritage**

In the course of the 2012-13 school year, I look forward to meeting with the Catholic school communities at each of our diocesan schools. The purpose is simple: to explore the foundational questions – what is Catholic identity? What is Catholic character? How do these questions shape both the vision and mission of each of our educational institutions?

This exercise comes at a time when the mega transition from schools being led and served by religious men and women and priests to laity takes firm hold and sets the direction for scores of years ahead.

The women and men religious along with priests experienced vocation first and foremost as a call to discipleship and commitment to the Lord Jesus both in a personal and communal way. They underwent years of formation during which time this identity became fully ingrained. Within this framework they then chose a “career” most often in teaching, healthcare and social service.

Thus, when the sisters, brothers, and priests arrived at a particular school they brought with them an identity which became the identifying character for the school. Beyond teaching, they invited their students in these Catholic schools into a relationship of faith that was then expressed in the practices of faith – sacraments and prayer. Religious curriculum was also incorporated as well as a commitment to service of those particularly in need.

In our days, the responsibility for Catholic identity has been transferred to the laity. Our boards – education, finance and pastoral – are called to contribute to the vision as well as engaging the whole parish in support and ownership of the school. Most crucial in developing Catholic character, however, is the immediate school community – pastor, principal and administration, teachers and staff, parents and students. As was the case with their religious predecessors, personal faith and the ability to share and witness this faith in Jesus and the Church constitute the foundation of the Catholic character of each school. From these roots flow sacramental practice, religion curriculum and service outreach.

The workshops that are being conducted help to focus on this identity and invite the stakeholders to deepen their vision of what constitutes the heart of a Catholic school now that they are responsible for the schools. With this vision embraced and shared, all can be intent on implementing the mission of the school introducing our young people into the Christian culture and way of life which we treasure and seek to pass on from generation to generation.