CAFOD
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

Leader's notes

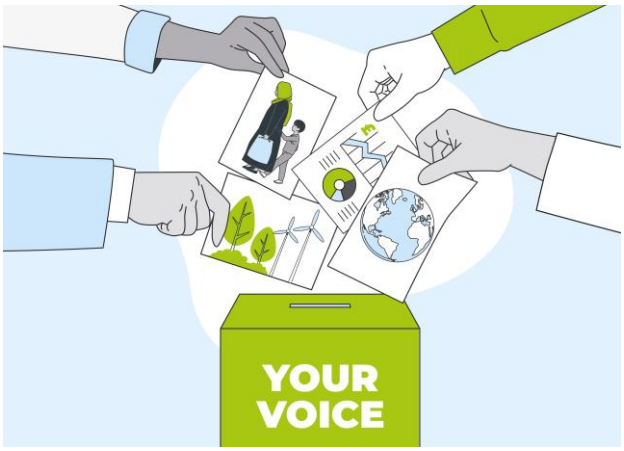
April 2024

Charity no 1160384 and a company limited by guarantee no 09387398.

Let's use our Catholic voice in the next General Election

The Church tells us that *"...All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes..."*[1]

With a general election on the horizon, we have joined forces with our friends from St Vincent de Paul (SVP) to launch A Year of Encounter. This new initiative invites parishes to reach out to local candidates to find out more about their views on the issues that we care about, from ending global poverty to tackling the climate crisis.



Enclosed you will find:

- A Year of Encounter booklet explaining more about this initiative and providing a step-by-step guide on the ways you can reach out to your local candidates.
- A promotional poster to let other parishioners know if you intend to attend a local hustings.

And on the reverse, a short talk that you may wish to deliver at the end of Mass to tell parishioners about this initiative, at a time that suits you over the coming weeks.

What are we asking you to do?

You will need to gather a group of interested parishioners together so that you can collectively contact your local candidates and raise some key issues with them. There are eight suggested issues, representing the work of CAFOD and SVP, but it's up to you which to focus on.

Once you have discussed as a group, we're suggesting you contact your candidate in three ways: 1) email the candidates as a parish group, 2) attend a local hustings and 3) ask questions of candidates when they knock on your door.

Here is a prayer to Our Lady asking for her intercession and guidance this year.

Year of Encounter prayer

Mary, model of encounter,
you heard God's call.
Teach us to listen deeply
in our polarised world.

Mary, woman of courage,
you sang joyfully of God's justice.
Inspire us to challenge inequality
and call for fulness of life for all.

Mary, seeker of sanctuary,
you fled violence and persecution.
Be with us as we seek peace
and respect for human dignity.

Mary, mother of community,
you joined the disciples at Pentecost.
Pray that the Spirit will empower us
as we act together for the common good.

Amen.

When does it start?

At the time of writing, the date of the general election has not yet been announced. But it could be called at any time.

So, we encourage you to start talking with your Priest and other parishioners as soon as possible so that when the time comes your parish will be ready to use its voice. If you would like support or have questions, your local CAFOD coordinator is there to help, or you can email us at: yearofencounter@cafod.org.uk

Training dates: Thurs 25 April 6.30pm OR Sat 4 May 11am

To support you as much as possible we are running an online training session about this initiative. Please register now and spread the word amongst other parishioners. Please note, you only need to attend one! Register at: **cafod.org.uk/election-meeting**

1. Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II, 1965, #75

Short talk:
"A Year of Encounter: Using our Catholic voice in the general election"

Good morning/evening everyone and thank you [priest's name] for giving me this opportunity to speak on behalf of CAFOD, the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development.

CAFOD provides practical support to people and communities in need around the world, as we all know. As part of its mission CAFOD also encourages Catholics in England and Wales to respond to the call of the Church to promote the common good, inviting all of us to play our part in creating the social conditions necessary to bring God's kingdom closer on earth.

With the general election on the horizon, CAFOD and St Vincent de Paul are launching *A Year of Encounter*, an initiative inviting parishes to reach out to local candidates to find out more about their views on the issues that we, as people of faith, care about, such as poverty and injustice.

This initiative is not about political affiliations; it is simply about strengthening community participation as a local faith group and practising the culture of encounter that Pope Francis talks about: reaching out to others, listening and creating relationships based on true dialogue.

The Church tells us that *"...All citizens ought to be aware of their right and duty to promote the common good by casting their votes..."* [1]

It is important that we are as well informed as possible when we cast our votes, so CAFOD and SVP have put together training sessions and a booklet that provides some easy steps on how to reach out to your local candidates.

For those who are interested in getting involved in this CAFOD and SVP initiative please take one of the booklets in the church entrance or talk to me after Mass.

Thank you for listening.

1. Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II, 1965, #75

Resources and a request from us!

The **short talk** above is available for you, whenever you want to deliver it in Mass, to explain this initiative to parishioners so that those who are interested can join you.

You can order more copies of the guide and the poster at **cafod.org.uk/shop**

You can also order a **short briefing about each of the eight issues** that we are focusing on from **cafod.org.uk/shop**, or download them as PDF files at **cafod.org.uk/encounter**

Please let us know what your parish is planning at cafod.org.uk/encounter. You can let us know if you're planning to contact the candidates, visit a hustings or respond on the doorstep, and let us know what happened afterwards.

Your local CAFOD coordinator will be in touch over the coming weeks to check you've received this pack and to discuss the initiative. Do sign up to an online session! (see front page)

You received this mailing as part of your volunteering agreement with CAFOD. If you want to stop volunteering or discuss your volunteering agreement, please contact your local CAFOD representative. For queries or to contact resources contact CAFOD Campaigns hotline: 020 7095 5692 or Helen at hmoseley@cafod.org.uk Photo credits: CAFOD