

FROM AMERICA'S PREMIER SEE

In Charity & Truth

Toward a Renewed Political Culture

By Archbishop William E. Lori

**STUDY
GUIDE**

Dear Friends in Christ -

Recently, I issued the pastoral letter *In Charity and Truth: Toward a Renewed Political Culture* as an invitation to prayerful reflection during this significant moment in our nation's history. As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of our country's founding, we do so not merely as citizens, but as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The political and cultural tensions we experience today can tempt us toward discouragement, anger, or withdrawal. Yet as Catholics, we are called to something greater. We are called to be leaven in the dough, salt of the earth, and light for the world. We are called to witness to charity and truth - together.

It is my hope that this study guide will assist parishes, schools, campus ministries, families, and individuals in engaging the pastoral letter more deeply. The guide is meant to foster prayer, thoughtful discussion, and spiritual renewal rooted in Sacred Scripture and the Church's social teaching.

Authentic political renewal begins not with strategies, but with conversion. It begins in our hearts. When we allow Christ to shape our conscience, purify our speech, and deepen our love for one another, we contribute to the healing of our civic culture.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the wisdom to speak the truth in love, the patience to listen attentively, and the charity to see in every person a brother or sister for whom Christ gave His life.

Entrusting this endeavor to the intercession of Mary, Immaculate Conception, Patroness of our nation, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

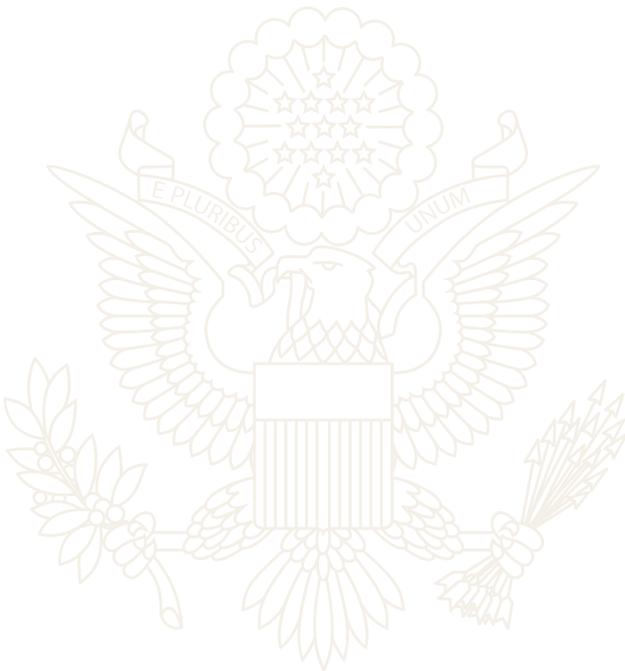
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore

How to Use This Guide

For each chapter:

1. Begin with one of the Scripture passages (read aloud).
2. Allow 3-5 minutes of silent reflection.
3. Read the corresponding section of the pastoral letter.
4. Use the discussion questions.
5. Conclude with one concrete application and prayer.



I N T R O D U C T I O N

A Moment of Grace and Responsibility

Core Theme

The 250th anniversary of American independence is a *kairos* moment – an opportunity for gratitude, repentance, and renewal rooted in Christ.

Key Emphases

- Celebration must include honest moral reflection.
- Christ is the foundation of authentic freedom and human dignity.
- Catholics are called to shape public life, not withdraw from it.

Scripture for Reflection

- Luke 12:48 – “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much.”
- Psalm 85:10 – Mercy and truth shall meet.
- Colossians 1:15-20 – Christ holds all things together.
- Matthew 5:13-16 – Salt and light.

Discussion Questions

- What does faithful patriotism look like?
- What does “gratitude and honesty” look like for you as you recall national history?
- How does Christ change the way we think about freedom?

Application

Commit to praying weekly for the nation and its leaders.

The Cultural Atmosphere We Breathe

Core Theme

Public discourse is marked by division, hostility, and suspicion. The deeper crisis is anthropological and spiritual.

Key Emphases

- Words wound communities.
- Political discourse today can cause loneliness and isolation.
- Social media often intensifies polarization.
- Every person bears the image of God.

Scripture

- James 3: 5-10 – The power of the tongue.
- Ephesians 4: 29-32 – Speak only what builds up.
- Genesis 1:26-27 – Image of God.
- Matthew 12: 36-37 – Accountability for speech.

Discussion

- How have I experienced political hostility personally?
- In what ways have I contributed to a toxic civic atmosphere?
- Do my words reflect Christ?
- What practices (prayer, dialogue, civic participation) help cultivate a healthier political climate?

Application

Adopt a personal “speech examen” before posting or commenting online.

A Moment for Renewal, Not Nostalgia

Core Theme

Honest remembrance fosters moral growth. Celebration without repentance is shallow.

Key Emphases

- National blessings and failures coexist.
- Renewal requires humility.
- The struggle for human dignity is unfinished.

Scripture

- Deuteronomy 8:2 – Remember the journey.
- Psalm 51 – Repentance.
- Revelation 2: 4-5 – Return to your first love.
- Isaiah 43: 18-19 – God doing something new.

Discussion

- How do we balance gratitude and critique?
- Where does renewal begin – in society or in the heart?
- What does it mean to love your country and seek its moral improvement?

Application

Examine one civic issue through both gratitude and repentance.

The Call of Synodality

Core Theme

Listening, walking together, and shared discernment are essential for Church and civic life.

Key Emphases

- Listening is an act of humility.
- Dialogue does not mean abandoning truth.
- Communion precedes strategy.

Scripture

- Luke 24: 13-35 – Road to Emmaus.
- James 1:19 – Slow to speak.
- Philippians 2: 1-5 – Mind of Christ.
- Acts 15 – Council of Jerusalem.

Discussion

- Do I truly listen to those who disagree with me?
- What does it mean to “walk together” politically?
- What practical habits promote listening over accusation?
- What would political discourse look like if modeled on Emmaus?

Application

Have one intentional conversation with someone who has different political views than you.

A New Kind of Politics

Core Theme

Politics must be rooted in service, not domination.

Key Emphases

- Reject ideological idolatry.
- Serve the dignity of every human life.
- Truth and charity belong together.

Scripture

- John 18:37 – Christ testifies to truth.
- Micah 6:8 – Act justly, love mercy.
- Matthew 20:25-28 – Leadership as service.
- Proverbs 29:2 – Just governance.

Discussion

- How can Christian conviction guide political engagement without domination or withdrawal?
- What unhelpful ideological habits do you notice in yourself or others?
- What does servant leadership look like today?

Application

Pray for one public servant by name each week.

Unity

Core Theme

Unity is rooted in baptism, not party affiliation.

Key Emphases

- Unity is not uniformity.
- Catholic identity precedes political identity.

Scripture

- John 17: 20-23 – Prayer for unity.
- Ephesians 4: 1-6 – One body.
- 1 Corinthians 12: 12 -27 – Many members.
- Psalm 133 – Beauty of unity.

Discussion

- What divides Catholics most today?
- How does Catholic unity help heal political division?
- How can unity coexist with principled disagreement?
- In what ways can Catholic identity shape public conversation about moral issues?

Application

Foster intergenerational dialogue within the parish.

Reclaiming a Culture of Encounter

Core Theme

Personal encounter rebuilds trust.

Key Emphases

- Avoid ideological enclaves.
- Encounter requires patience and courage.

Scripture

- Luke 10: 33-37 – Good Samaritan.
- John 4 – Samaritan woman.
- Matthew 25: 31-46 – Christ in the least.
- Hebrews 13:2 – Hospitality.

Discussion

- Who is the “other” in my life, politically, and how might I practice encounter them?
- What prevents authentic encounter?
- What barriers make dialogue difficult, and how can the Church help break them down?

Application

Engage in one act of service that crosses social or political lines.

The Role of Virtue in Public Life

Core Theme

Political renewal requires moral formation.

Key Emphases

- Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance.
- Character shapes culture.

Scripture

- Galatians 5: 22-23 – Fruits of the Spirit.
- Wisdom 8: 7 – Cardinal virtues.
- 2 Peter 1: 5-8 – Growth in virtue.
- Matthew 7: 16-20 – Known by fruits.

Discussion

- Which virtue is weakest in our public life?
- Which virtue is weakest in me?
- How can my parish/school/group/family promote virtue in public life?

Application

Choose one virtue to cultivate intentionally for a month.

The Responsibility of Catholics & Catholic Citizenship

Core Theme

Conscience must be formed by Church teaching.

Key Emphases

- Avoid partisan captivity.
- Seek the common good.
- Protect life and human dignity.

Scripture

- Romans 12: 1-2 – Renew your mind.
- 1 Peter 2: 13-17 – Responsible citizenship.
- Acts 5: 29 – Obey God first.
- Jeremiah 29:7 – Seek the city's welfare.

Discussion

- Is my conscience well formed?
- What sources shape my political thinking?
- What challenges do Catholics face in political participation today?
- How can I help others from a Catholic approach to public life?

Application

Review Church teaching on a current issue before forming an opinion.

The Spiritual Crisis Beneath the Political Crisis

Core Theme

Political disorder reflects spiritual disorder.

Key Emphases

- Renewal begins with prayer.
- Sacramental life strengthens civic witness.

Scripture

- John 15:4-5 – Abide in me.
- 2 Chronicles 7:14 – Humble yourselves and pray.
- Romans 8: 5-9 – Life in the Spirit.
- Psalm 127:1 – Unless the Lord builds.

Discussion

- How does my prayer and sacramental life affect my public engagement?
- What spiritual practices sustain courage and renew love of neighbor?

Application

Commit to Eucharistic Adoration or regular Confession during this study.

A Path Forward: Becoming Instruments of Renewal

Core Theme

Hopeful action rooted in charity and truth.

Key Emphases

- Speak truth in love.
- Reject hatred and violence.
- Serve the common good.

Scripture

- 1 Corinthians 13: 4-7 – Charity defined.
- Ephesians 4:15 – Truth in love.
- Matthew 5:9 – Peacemakers.
- Romans 13:10 – Love fulfills the law.

Discussion

- What concrete step is God asking of me for renewal this year?
- How can our parish embody renewal?

Application

Each participant writes one personal commitment and shares it.

CONCLUDING GROUP EXERCISE

At the end of the full study:

1. Identify three cultural wounds most affecting your community
2. Identify three virtues needed to heal them.
3. Draft a parish/school/group “Commitment to Charity and Truth.”
4. Close with Psalm 85 and the Lord’s Prayer.



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