

WHAT ISSUE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT?

While our Bishops have offered moral guidance for Catholics on many topics, they have been clear that one issue is the most important: "The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed." (*Faithful Citizenship* 28)

"The inalienable right to life of every innocent human person outweighs other concerns where Catholics may use prudential judgment, such as how best to meet the needs of the poor or to increase access to health care for all." (New York State Bishops, *Our Cherished Right, Our Solemn Duty*)

"... direct threats to the sanctity and dignity of human life, such as human cloning and destructive research on human embryos, are also intrinsically evil. These must always be opposed. Other direct assaults on innocent human life and violations of human dignity, such as genocide, torture, racism, and the targeting of noncombatants in acts of terror or war, can never be justified." (*Faithful Citizenship* 22-23)

"Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care... [But] the failure to protect and defend life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the 'rightness' of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community." (United States Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life* 23)

HOW DO WE CHOOSE A CANDIDATE TO VOTE FOR?

"In making these decisions, it is essential for Catholics to be guided by a well-formed conscience that recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that the moral obligation to oppose policies promoting intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate's commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. In the end, this is a decision to be made by each Catholic guided by a conscience formed by Catholic moral teaching." (*Faithful Citizenship* 37)

"Catholic voters should use Catholic teaching to examine candidates' positions on issues and should consider candidates' integrity, philosophy, and performance. It is important for all citizens to see beyond party politics, to analyze campaign rhetoric critically, and to choose their

political leaders according to principle, not party affiliation or mere self-interest". (*Faithful Citizenship* 41)

A Catholic cannot vote for a candidate who favors a policy promoting an intrinsically evil act, such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, deliberately subjecting workers or the poor to subhuman living conditions, redefining marriage in ways that violate its essential meaning, or racist behavior, if the voter's intent is to support that position. In such cases, a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in grave evil. (*Faithful Citizenship* 34)

"As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate's position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter's support. Yet candidate's position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support." (*Faithful Citizenship* 42)

"There may be times when a Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position may decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permissible only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil." (*Faithful Citizenship* 35)

"When all candidates hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter faces a dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods." (*Faithful Citizenship* 36)

FINAL WORDS

Our decisions about voting should be informed by prayer, seeking to understand God's will for ourselves and our country. "It is important to be clear that the political choices faced by citizens not only have an impact on general peace and prosperity but also may affect the individual's salvation. Similarly, the kinds of laws and policies supported by public officials affect their spiritual well-being." (*Faithful Citizenship* 38)

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

For more information on voting and elections, see our website: <http://www.archny.org/election-materials>