

CONSCIENCE AND THE CATHOLIC VOTER – 2ND OF 8

“In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue, and participation in political life is a moral obligation.”
- *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 13

Since participation in political life is a moral obligation, Catholics need to form their conscience with the mind and heart of the Church on issues of consequence. This outline is the second of eight, which will examine important moral and political issues. This second outline will provide an overview of the issue of abortion.

Abortion

Every single human life is valuable and possesses a dignity beyond our imagination. As 4th century Church Father St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote:

God did not make the heavens in his image, nor the moon, the sun, the beauty of the stars, nor anything else which you can see... You alone are made in the image and likeness of that nature which surpasses all understanding... Nothing in all creation can equal your grandeur. (Kyriaki FitzGerald, Persons in Communion, p. 72)

This is why the Church has unequivocally taught that abortion is an intrinsic evil, which must be opposed. It violates the fifth commandment of ‘thou shalt not kill’ as it destroys an innocent human life. No circumstance warrants any person, let alone a mother of a child, to end the life of another human person. This is why Archbishop Jose Gomez, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) once remarked,

Abortion is not a “Catholic” issue. It is a matter of fundamental human rights. In fact, I believe it is the foundational issue of our time. Because it is so important, the church has spoken clearly about it and believes it is an essential aspect of the Catholic faith. (Today’s Catholic, Newspaper of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, 10 October 2008)

Because the opposition to abortion is an essential aspect of the Catholic faith, Catholics cannot support politicians who advocate for abortion or ‘abortion rights.’ While this does not mean Catholics should only care about the abortion issue, it does mean Catholics cannot excuse or dismiss this grave error in judgment concerning politicians political positioning on this issue. As the USCCB has written:

Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care ... But being ‘right’ in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life. Indeed, 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. If we understand the human person as the ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’ — the living house of God — then these latter issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house’s foundation. These directly and immediately violate the human person’s most fundamental right — the right to life. Neglect of these issues is the equivalent of building our house on sand. Such attacks cannot help but lull the social conscience in ways ultimately destructive of other human rights. (1998 Pastoral Letter of the USCCB, Living the Gospel of Life, 22)

In summation, abortion is not just one issue among many. It is the human rights issue of our time and the preeminent issue of life and importance in this election. As Catholics, it is our duty to protect the most fundamental right of the human person: the right to life. The intentional destruction of innocent human life is intrinsically evil. It must always be opposed.

Peter Range, Director, Office for Life and Justice, Catholic Charities, Diocese of Toledo, prange@toledodiocese.org.

Learn more and watch videos at www.awakencatholic.org/election. Read the party platforms: Democratic Party, <https://bit.ly/3hrosqg>; Republican Party, <https://bit.ly/3hqWV8D> (Note: Rep. Party voted to continue their 2016 Platform)

CONSCIENCE AND THE CATHOLIC VOTER – 3RD of 8

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Marriage and the Family

The family is the foundational cell of society. That is why the Church teaches what Pope Saint John Paul II wrote in 1981:

The future of humanity passes by way of the family. It is therefore indispensable and urgent that every person of good will should endeavor to save and foster the values and requirements of the family. I feel that I must ask for a particular effort in this field from the sons and daughters of the Church... They must show the family special love. This is an injunction that calls for concrete action. (Saint John Paul II, Familiaris Consortio, On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World, 86)

If the future of humanity passes by the way of the family, Catholics should pay special attention to the political approaches of candidates to the family. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has written, Catholic are called to:

Protect the fundamental understanding of marriage as the life-long and faithful union of one man and one woman as the central institution of society; promote the complementarity of the sexes and reject false “gender” ideologies; provide better support for family life morally, socially, and economically, so that our nation helps parents raise their children with respect for life, sound moral values, and an ethic of stewardship and responsibility. (The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, Handout Part II)

Yet today, we find the family in crisis. As Pope Francis has pointed out:

The family is experiencing a profound cultural crisis (which) is particularly serious because the family is the fundamental cell of society, where we learn to live with others despite our differences and to belong to one another, it is also the place where parents pass on the faith to their children. (Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 66)

This crisis arises from a general lack of openness to life, the use of contraception, absentee fatherhood, and the destruction of what marriage actually is. The Church has always taught that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman that brings them together as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their union produces.

Marriage is a covenant “by which man and woman establish themselves a partnership of the whole of life that is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1601)

In summation, marriage is the building block of families, and therefore of all human civilization. Marriage then has public, not just private, purposes. The Church recognizes then that marriage is based on the truth that men and women are distinct and complimentary, that having children requires a man and a woman, and that every child deserves both a mom and a dad. Catholics therefore should pay special attention to where candidates stand on the crucial role of the family, that is founded on God’s design for love, between a man and a woman in marriage.

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Religious Freedom

Catholics in America have long enjoyed the fact that in the Bill of Rights, religious liberty, with its rights of conscience, is the first freedom that is protected in our Constitution. Yet today, religious freedom, even in the United States, is consistently being challenged. As Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, the acting chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty has pointed out:

Religious freedom is under stress throughout the world. Even in our Western liberal democracies, discrimination against religion in general and Catholic Christianity, in particular, is growing... “Yet, just as freedom of speech depends not only on one’s right to say what’s on one’s mind but also on the existence of institutions like newspapers, universities, libraries, political parties and other associations that make up what we call ‘civil society,’ so too freedom of religion ‘for the good of all’ must also encompass protecting those institutions that nourish the individual’s free exercise of religion. (Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami, <http://www.usccb.org/news/20-100.cfm>)

We can see this stress and hostility towards religion from cases against the Little Sisters of the Poor to faith-based adoption agencies, the accreditation of religious educational institutions, the grants and contracts of faith-based charities and small businesses, and the licensing of religious professions. Our cherished religious liberties are now at stake by our political choices. As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has written:

In the United States, religious freedom generally enjoys strong protection in our law and culture, but those protections are now in doubt. For example, the longstanding tax exemption of the Church has been explicitly called into question at the highest levels of government, precisely because of her teachings on marriage. Catholics have a particular duty to make sure that protections like these do not weaken but instead grow in strength. This is not only to secure the just freedom of the Church and the faithful here but also to offer hope and an encouraging witness to those who suffer direct and even violent religious persecution in countries where the protection is far weaker. (The Challenge of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, P. 30)

It is imperative then as Catholics that we defend religious liberty and the rights of conscience in our political choices. For religious liberty has its foundation in the dignity of the human person. As Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami points out:

The right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person. Religious freedom is the human right that guarantees all other rights — peace and creative living together will only be possible if freedom of religion is fully respected. (<http://www.usccb.org/news/20-100.cfm>)

In summation, it is the duty of every Catholic to fight for religious liberty to ensure not only the right of conscience in the workplace, but so that families, Churches, and peoples of all faiths can work in accordance with their religious beliefs while they care for the common good, the poor and vulnerable, and God’s creation.

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Immigration

The first principle of Catholic Social Teaching is the dignity of the human person. From the moment of conception, each person is made in the image and likeness of God. This principle teaches us then that every immigrant, documented or undocumented, is made in God’s image and deserves our love and respect as a child of God.

As the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has written:

The Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances. (Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, 2000)

Thus our starting point in discussing the immigration issue is one of mutual respect and the recognition of the dignity of our fellow man, especially the immigrant among us. One who has traveled to Latin American countries in particular can understand some of the desperate circumstances which drive migrants to our border seeking a better life.

Of course, the Church recognizes that a sovereign nation has a right and a responsibility to protect its own borders. As Pope Francis has stated:

Can borders be controlled? Yes, each country has a right to control its borders, who enters and who leaves, and countries that are in danger—of terrorism or the like—have more right to control them more . . . (Pope Francis, Interview with the Spanish newspaper El País on January 22, 2017)

The sovereignty of nations is consistent thought in Catholic Social Teaching as is further explained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 2241:

Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants’ duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws, and to assist in carrying civic burdens.

In summation, Catholics approaching the immigration issue must maintain a balance between caring for the dignity of every human person, be they documented or undocumented in our nation, while appreciating the necessity of each nation state to regulate its borders for the common good. Given the prosperity in the United States of America, it is also important for our nation to strive to seek to help, as best as we are able, those seeking a better life:

The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2241)

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Diocese of Toledo
Perpetuate The Gift Appeal
Frequently Asked Questions
Commitment Weekend – September 19-20, 2020

What is “Perpetuate The Gift”?

Perpetuate The Gift is simply the annual appeal that supports our Diocesan Priests’ Retirement Fund. It signifies the beautifully unending and total commitment of our priests to our spiritual salvation, and our contribution to their retirement.

How many retired Priests do we currently have?

All diocesan priests are eligible to receive retirement benefits in accordance with the Priest Retirement Plan. We currently have 86 retired priests and 90 active priests whose average age is 50 years old.

Who oversees the Priests’ Retirement Fund?

The fund is overseen by the Priests’ Retirement Fund Board, which is a subcommittee of the Finance Council of the Diocese of Toledo. The Board is composed of priest representatives, both active and retired, professionals in the actuarial fields and plan administration. The plan administration and actuarial professionals are present at all board meetings.

How are the funds invested?

The funds are invested with professional fund managers in socially responsible investments, as defined by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Oversight is provided by the Priests’ Retirement Board, Diocesan Investment Committee and Diocesan Finance Council.

Don’t we already support the retired priests through the *Collection for Retired Religious*?

No, the *National Collection for Retired Religious* does not benefit our diocesan priests. The funds for the *National Collection for Retired Religious* support priests, brothers and sisters of the various religious orders and communities throughout the United States.

Doesn’t the parish already make a contribution to the Priests’ Retirement Fund?

Yes, each parish has always provided support for the Priest Retirement Fund. But please remember, all contributions to the *Perpetuate the Gift* appeal between September 19, 2020 and December 31, 2020 will reduce—dollar-for-dollar—the amount the parish needs to contribute to the fund via the annual Priest Retirement Assessment, thus assisting our parishes.

What are the typical living expenses for a retired priest?

When a priest retires, his living expenses actually increase. A retired priest is responsible for his personal expenses such as food, clothing, car, housing and utility costs, and medical expenses. While a priest is active, his housing and food expenses are paid by the parish, school, or diocesan institution to which he is assigned. When he retires, he must provide for his own housing needs, unless he chooses to live in a rectory/parish setting.

It is important to know that, in their generosity, many of our priests designate the Priests' Retirement Fund as a beneficiary of their estate to ensure the care of priests who follow after them.

What are the sources of typical retirement income for a retired priest?

The income for a retired priest is generally derived from three sources: Priests' Retirement Fund pension, Social Security payments, and personal savings. While most individuals split their FICA tax with their employer 50/50, diocesan priests are considered self-employed by the IRS, so each priest pays the entire 15.3% FICA tax out of his own salary.

How can I make a gift?

A gift of cash or check can be placed in your parish collection or sent to:

Perpetuate The Gift
PO Box 954
Toledo, OH 43697

Online gifts by credit card or direct debit can be made at www.toledodiocese.org. Click on ***Give*** and select ***Perpetuate the Gift*** in the drop down box.

To make a gift of stock, please contact the Office of Mission Advancement at 419.244.6711.

If you are interested in designating a bequest to the ***Perpetuate the Gift***, please contact the Office of Mission Advancement at 419.244.6711.