

The Election and Life Issues

We Deserve Better Than the Lesser of Two Evils

As Catholics, what is our civic responsibility? Is it ever justified to vote for “the lesser of two evils”? Catholics who desire to remain faithful to Church teaching want to vote for candidates who support what Pope Benedict XVI called the **non-negotiable issues: human life, marriage and family, and religious liberty**. Though there are few candidates at any level of government who would act in full agreement with Church teaching, these keys issues should assist our choosing among them. “When so much attention is focused on the economy, as important as it is, authentic concern for the common good begins with defending the non-negotiable values upon which a morally, politically and economically healthy society depends.” [Colin Donovan, *Is There a Lesser of Two Evils?*, *National Catholic Register*, 10/16/2016.]

This year’s presidential election is worrisome. “One candidate, in the view of lot of people, is a belligerent demagogue with an impulse-control problem. And the other, also in the view of a lot of people, is a criminal liar, uniquely rich in stale ideas & bad priorities,” said Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia. For people of faith who seek to **protect the unborn and defend religious liberty**, there is a growing sense of dread that Catholic moral teaching will come to be seen, in the words of George Weigel, as “a threat to social progress.” [*First Things*, 9/28/2016].

During his flight back to Rome from Georgia and Azerbaijan on Oct.2, Pope Francis commented on the U.S. election by saying: “Study the proposals well, pray and choose in conscience,” formed integrally by Church teaching. R.R. Reno, author of *Resurrecting the Idea of a Christian Society*, observed that without faith in God, “secular progressivism makes **a god of politics**. Christianity, by contrast, recognizes that politics, while important, is not ultimate.” The late Cardinal Francis George said: “For too many, politics is the ultimate horizon of their thinking and acting.” In an editorial in the Oct. 9 issue of *Our Sunday Visitor*, we read: “This is a First Commandment issue. This is about when political ideology and partisanship become an idol – one’s top identity and priority. ... The stakes are too high, it seems, for distractions like decency, charity, empathy and respect for the truth.” Unfortunately, many of us put our party affiliation above our basic Christian principles. **We are being called to do better.**

Do We Still Have a Constitutional Right to Religious Freedom?

Could our government ever prevent you from going to Mass? Could officials ever ban Catholic schools from operating in this country? Well, here is what Martin Castro, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, thinks: the phrases “religious liberty” and “religious freedom” are simply “**code words for discrimination**, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance.”

As the values of faith are being displaced as the central guiding light of our lives and our country, we are now seeing them denigrated and, shockingly, criticized. Hard to believe? Consider these troubling developments:

- The Ninth Circuit court recently ruled that crisis pregnancy centers, many established to counter the abortion culture, have been ordered to supply information to women on **where to get an abortion!** Yet, Planned Parenthood clinics are not required to perform sonograms or advise their clients where to get alternative assistance.
- The U.S. Supreme Court in June turned down an appeal by a family pharmacy in Washington state from a lower court order requiring the pharmacists to **violate their consciences** by dispensing an abortifacient. Three Justices objected to the majority opinion: “If this is a sign of how religious liberty claims will be treated in the years ahead, those who value religious freedom have great **cause for concern**,” wrote Alito.
- The best-known instance of abuse of religious liberty to date is the HHS mandate by which the Obama administration sought to force the Little Sisters of the Poor and other religious groups to provide contraceptive coverage, including abortifacients, in employee health insurance. The Supreme Court told the contesting parties to find a compromise, but the outcome is uncertain.

The idea that **religious liberty must give way** when it conflicts with a current state-approved version of non-discrimination is a central tenet, a matter of faith, you might say, for today’s aggressive secularism. [Russell Shaw, *The Growing Threat of Nondiscrimination Laws*, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 10/9/2016]

St. John Paul II [1979 at UN] Religious freedom, affirmed in law and cherished in the consciences of a people, creates essential limits to the **power of the state** and sets boundaries to the capacity of the state to intrude into the convictions and conscientious practices of individuals, families, & communities.

Is There Any Consensus on Life Issues?

- 80% of Americans agree: Abortion should have real legal limits
- Even 60% of “pro-choice” Americans agree: Abortion should happen only during the first three months of pregnancy

Despite the media slant on the topic, there’s every reason to believe we can **build a culture of life** in the USA. We can do this by speaking out about our beliefs at every opportunity, and by supporting legal limits to unfettered abortion.

Attn: Young Singles

Why not try dating others who share your Catholic faith?
One source is www.CatholicMatch.com

Abortion to Save the Life of the Mother?

Only a small percentage of late-term abortions are done with the sole intent of saving the mother from dying from complications with pregnancy. But even that small number of “lifesaving” abortions is questionable, because the best **medical evidence** reveals that, of the few women who die of disease while pregnant, there’s not even one cause of death abortion can prevent. [For the complete story, see David Reardon, Ph.D., *Hillary Clinton is Wrong: Research Shows Abortion is Never Necessary to Save the Life of the Mother*, *LifeNews*, 10/26/2016.]

Pope Visits Neonatal Unit & Hospice

As part of his monthly Mercy Friday activities, Pope Francis made a visit to the neonatal unit of Rome’s San Giovanni Hospital on Sept. 16, where he held and blessed ailing newborns. Later that day, he visited with **terminally ill patients** at the Villa Speranza Hospice.

With visits to both places, the pope wanted to “send a strong signal about the importance of life from its first moment until its natural end,” according to the Vatican press office.



Law and Loving Support Both Needed

In a letter to *St. Anthony Messenger* magazine (11/2016), Maria Gallagher (Harrisburg, PA) pointed out that the “**law is a teacher** and, therefore, the Supreme court’s *Roe v. Wade* decision, by permitting the killing of precious pre-born babies, teaches that life can be disrespected in this country without consequence.”

Conversely, laws that protect innocent unborn children “teach greater respect for human life in general. ... Studies

have proven that **pro-life laws save lives**. For instance, when the Pennsylvania Abortion Control Act went into effect, abortion totals in the commonwealth were cut in half.”

“I agree that pregnant women need compassionate counseling and assistance, which are provided by the many pregnancy help centers around the country. We need both protective laws and loving support to end the tragedy of abortion in our nation.”

Physician-Assisted Suicide?

Although New Jersey legislators have approved a bill that would allow doctors to prescribe lethal drugs a terminally ill patients could take to end their life, a number of groups oppose it. Among them are the NJ Catholic Conference and other religious organizations, NJ Right to Life, disability rights groups such as Not Dead Yet, and the Medical Society of New Jersey.

“They object for many reasons. Some say the law would give too much power to guardians and relatives who may try to force, or at least **steer them, toward ending their lives**. Others say elderly or sick people may feel obligated to die rather than burden others with their care. They also point to two episodes in Oregon in which an insurance company **refused potentially life-extending treatment** but approved the payment for the less expensive, life-ending medications.” Moreover, the bill does not require either a psychological nor a palliative consultation before a fatal prescription can be written. Also, “terminal” is defined as with or without medical treatment, so people with, for example, diabetes, or COPD, could qualify. [*Newark Star-Ledger*, 10/20/2016 and 10/23/2016]

More and more hospitals now view “**extraordinary care**” to include the provision of basic care, food and hydration.

From a larger perspective, the “right to die” soon becomes the **duty to die**. Thus, the elderly, the handicapped and the chronically ill become far more pressured to end it all. Insurance coverage is likely to shift away from care and towards “exit” procedures. The “call to compassion is too often a wolf disguised as a sheep.” [Msgr. Charles Pope, *Our Sunday Visitor*, 10/23/2016]

One woman who testified at the NJ legislative hearings is Sarah Steele (Camden Co.). Diagnosed with stage 3 lymphoma, she was told she would **never have children**. After years of treatment, she had become the mother of three. Then she was diagnosed with a rare, aggressive stage 3 brain cancer. After 2 surgeries, she was told she would **not see that Christmas**. Now, surviving years later, she believes assisted suicide is a slippery slope, undermining the sanctity of life. [Paterson Diocese, *The Beacon*, 10/6/2016]