

Voting Principles for Catholics

1) "There are some things we must never do, as individuals or as a society, because they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. Such actions are so deeply flawed that they are always opposed to the authentic good of persons. These are called 'intrinsically evil' actions. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned," (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB, #22).

Principle: You cannot support something that is intrinsically evil.

2) "A vote for a candidate who promotes actions or behaviors that are intrinsically evil and gravely sinful makes you morally complicit and places the eternal salvation of your own soul in serious jeopardy," (*Catholic Times*, September 23, 2012, Bishop Thomas Paprocki, Diocese of Springfield).

"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," (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB, #38).

Principle: By voting for someone who supports and advocates an intrinsic evil, you are participating in that intrinsic evil, and could possibly be committing a mortal sin that jeopardizes your eternal salvation.

3) "Some issues involve 'intrinsic evils'; that is, they can never under any circumstance or condition be morally justified. Preeminent among these intrinsic evils are legalized abortion, the promotion of same sex unions and 'marriages', repression of religious liberty, as well as public policies permitting euthanasia, racial discrimination or destructive human embryonic stem cell research," (*Clarification of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Bishops of Dallas/Ft. Worth).

Principle: Abortion, same-sex "marriage," and the repression of religious liberty - which are three of the pre-eminent issues in this current election cycle - are indeed all intrinsically evil. Therefore, by voting for someone who advocates and supports abortion, same-sex "marriage," and/or the repression of religious liberty, you are participating in an intrinsic evil and could be jeopardizing your salvation.

4) "The fact that only the negative commandments oblige always and under all circumstances does not mean, that in the moral life, prohibitions are more important than the obligation to do good indicated by the positive commandment," (*Veritatis Splendor*, Pope John Paul II, #52).

"The right to life implies and is linked to other human rights—to the basic goods that every human person needs to live and thrive. All the life issues are connected, for erosion of respect for the life of any individual or group in society necessarily diminishes respect for all life. The moral imperative to respond to the needs of our neighbors—basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work—is universally binding on our consciences and may be legitimately fulfilled by a variety of means," (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, USCCB, #25).

Principle: Both opposing evil and doing good - feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, etc. - are essential obligations. Issues that pertain to basic needs such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work are all linked to the right to life.

5) "Disregard for the right to life, precisely because it leads to the killing of the person whom society exists to serve, is what most directly conflicts with the possibility of achieving the common good...It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and

defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop..." (The Gospel of Life, Pope John Paul II, #72; #101)

"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," (Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, #28).

"Therefore, we cannot make more clear the seriousness of the overriding issue of abortion – while not the ‘only issue’ – it is the defining moral issue, not only today, but of the last 35 years. Since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, more than 48 million innocent lives have been lost. Each year in our nation more than one million lives are lost through legalized abortion," (*Clarification of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Bishops of Dallas/Ft. Worth).

Principle: Abortion is the overriding issue, the defining moral issue, of our day because it is from the right to life that all the other rights - the right to food, shelter, health care, religious liberty, etc. - flow and are made meaningful.

6) "As Catholics we are faced with a number of issues that are of concern and should be addressed, such as immigration reform, healthcare, the economy and its solvency, care and concern for the poor, and the war on terror. As Catholics we must be concerned about these issues and work to see that just solutions are brought about. There are many possible solutions to these issues and there can be reasonable debate among Catholics on how to best approach and solve them. These are matters of 'prudential judgment.' But let us be clear: issues of prudential judgment are not morally equivalent to issues involving intrinsic evils. No matter how right a given candidate is on any of these issues, it does not outweigh a candidate's unacceptable position in favor of an intrinsic evil such as abortion or the protection of 'abortion rights,'" (*Clarification of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Bishops of Dallas/Ft. Worth).

"Jesus tells us very clearly that if we don't help the poor, we're going to go to Hell...But, Jesus didn't say the government has to take care of them, or that we have to pay taxes to take care of them. Those are prudential judgments...You can't say that somebody is not Christian because they want to limit taxation. To say that it's somehow intrinsically evil like abortion doesn't make any sense at all," (National Catholic Reporter, Interview with Archbishop Chaput, September 14, 2012).

Principle: Not to have concern for, and not to care for, the poor, and the provision of basic human needs - food, shelter, healthcare, and so on - is intrinsically evil. However, the best way to address issues pertaining to the care and concern for the poor, and the provision of basic human needs, is a matter that can and should be discussed and debated. Disagreements as to the best way to address the concerns of the poor - more/less government; more/less taxes; etc. - are matters of prudential judgment. Two people can disagree on matters of prudential judgment and both still be in line with Church teaching.

Principle: A candidate's position with respect to matters that pertain to prudential judgments about immigration reform, healthcare, the economy, and care and concern for the poor, do not hold the same moral equivalence as a candidate's positions on intrinsic evils such as abortion and same-sex "marriage." Two people cannot disagree on matters of intrinsic evil and both still be in line with Church teaching.

Principle: If a candidate gets it "right" in your eyes on matters of prudential judgment vs. their opponent; but is wrong on matters of intrinsic evil vs. their opponent; then the matters of prudential judgment cannot "make up" for being wrong on matters of intrinsic evil.

So, those are a few principles that Catholics need to take into consideration when stepping into the voting booth. I will close with a couple of questions for those who would support someone who is a staunch supporter of abortion and abortion "rights," not because you

agree with their position on abortion, but because you agree with one or more of their other positions regarding government, taxation, welfare, education, the economy, and so on, and you think their positions on these issues outweigh their position on abortion. If you are one such person, please consider these questions carefully:

Let's say that the candidate you are voting for, instead of being a staunch supporter of abortion, and a supporter of the laws that allow for the killing of more than one million unborn babies each year, let's say that instead of supporting abortion, that candidate was a staunch supporter of laws that allowed for the lynching of one million black men a year. Could you still vote for that candidate? Would their position on healthcare or education or immigration outweigh their position on lynching?

Or, let's say, instead of supporting abortion, that candidate was a staunch supporter of laws that allowed for the gassing of one million Jews a year. Could you still vote for that candidate? Would their position on healthcare or education or immigration outweigh their position on gassing Jews?

Let's be honest...you answered a strong, resounding, "NO!!!" to each of those questions, didn't you? You could not and would not vote for a candidate who supported the lynching of even one black man, much less one million black men, no matter how "right" he or she was on the other issues. You could not and would not vote for a candidate who supported the gassing of even one Jew, much less one million Jews, no matter how right he or she was on the other issues.

How, then, can one vote for a candidate who supports abortion "rights" and who supports laws that allow for the killing of over one million unborn children a year?! The only way one can do that is if they do not believe the unborn child is a human being deserving of full protection under the law. The only way one can do that is by devaluing the life of the unborn child.

It is not my job here to tell anyone who they should vote for, but it is my job to let folks know what they need to consider when voting. Now, there are some who will say that the questions I posed above are a bit harsh. Well, I agree. But, before anyone emails me or calls me, please look at a picture of an aborted baby (you can find such pictures by doing a quick search on the internet) and consider if anything I've written is harsher than what happened to that baby.