

PRIORITIES AT THE POLLS

By Most Reverend Joseph F. Naumann

As Catholics approach the polls, we are asked to weigh many important issues. The U.S. bishops have reaffirmed that "the threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed."[1] While they did warn us not to "dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty," they did give priority to upholding and defending our brothers' and sisters' most basic right—to live.

Abortion tragically ends someone's life when he or she is most vulnerable and most in need of loving protection. Abortion is an intrinsic evil, meaning that it is never permitted or morally justified, regardless of individual circumstances or intentions. The personal and societal consequences of attacks against human life,

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whether at its earliest stages or at its final stages, are all the more serious because most often they are "carried out in the very heart of and with the complicity of the family—the family which by its nature is called to be the 'sanctuary of life.'"[2] This is the place where a person should be *most* loved, cherished, and protected.

Catholics are called to defend human life wherever it is threatened and stand up for human dignity wherever it is violated. The enormous number of human lives destroyed by abortion is one factor that elevates its importance. Beginning in 1973 with *Roe v. Wade*, and during the nearly



50-year period after *Roe* in which the Supreme Court forbade state prohibitions on abortion, nearly 64 million children have been killed—and untold numbers of women and men suffer in the aftermath.[3]

Even with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, a decision that returns the abortion issue to the electorate, many states continue not to recognize children in their mothers' wombs

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as persons warranting protection under the law. Federal laws in our country fail to protect the lives of unborn children, and many political leaders at the state and federal level, work actively to increase access to abortion. Some falsely describe it as health care and even as a basic human right.[4]

People of good will must boldly stand up against this intrinsic evil, especially when it is occurring on a massive scale, implemented in law and funded, in some instances, by the government. As believers and citizens inspired by the Gospel and guided by the shepherds of our Church, we must



do what we can to end violence in the womb, to ensure that unborn children are fully recognized and protected by our laws, and to support mothers and fathers in embracing life.

At of the time of original publication in October 2020, Archbishop Naumann was Archbishop of Kansas City, Kansas and Chair of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

SIGN UP: votervoice.net/usccb/register

Take action and contact your elected representatives about important pro-life issues.

Make your voice heard.

1 *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, Introductory Letter, p. 6. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2020. https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf
2 Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1995), 11.
3 This paragraph has been revised in light of the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, in which the Court returned the issue of abortion to the people's elected representatives at the Federal and State levels. As of October 2022, abortion is legal in more states than not, and more work is needed in the coming months and years.
4 *Ibid*.

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Please find the full text of Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship at www.faithfulcitizenship.org.

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