

CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR VOTING

"The political community . . . exists for the common good: This is its full justification and meaning, and the source of its specific and basic right to exist. The common good embraces all those conditions of social life which enable individuals, families and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment" ~Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes), 74.

Pope Saint John Paul II explains that the common good, *"is not simply the sum total of particular interests; rather it involves an assessment and integration of those interests on the basis of a balanced hierarchy of values; ultimately, it demands a correct understanding of the dignity and the rights of the person."* In other words, because some issues are foundational, they can outweigh many other issues. If we think of the common good for our country as a house, some issues represent *"the crossbeams and walls of that house,"* while others represent the *"house's foundation."* (See USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, 22)

Intrinsic Evils: Some things are always wrong regardless of the circumstances. Examples of Intrinsic Evils that attack the Common Good: Abortion, Euthanasia, Contraception, Homosexual Marriage, Gender Confusion, Socialism, Racism, Religious Persecution.

Prudential Judgments: Some issues require a consideration of the circumstances.

Catholics of good conscience can disagree on these issues. Examples of Prudential Judgment Issues: How to best care for the poor (entitlements vs. tax incentives for charitable giving); how to best care for the environment; education (more funding for public schools vs. offering vouchers for private schools); questions of national defense, healthcare; how to best grow the economy; how to regulate immigration and protect our borders, etc.

Foundational Issues that involve Intrinsic Evils:

Among those issues that concern intrinsic evils, some issues are foundational, in that failure to defend them can cause the whole house to collapse. Some evils attack the crossbeams or walls of the "house" of our society and some attack and destroy the foundation.

The Protection of innocent human life is the preeminent foundational issue for the common good. Overcoming direct threats against innocent human life (abortion and

Euthanasia) is the “*fundamental human rights issue*” (USCCB, *Resolution on Abortion*). Pope Saint John Paul II: This is “*the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights*”, “*the highest priority in our societies*”, the right “*upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop.*” “*If the right to life is not defended decisively as a condition for all other rights of the person, all other references to human rights remain deceitful and illusory.*”

The intrinsic evil of killing innocent human life (abortion and euthanasia) is the foundational issue that outweighs other issues of prudential judgment (how we care for the poor, the economy, health care, immigration, etc.) and even some other issues regarding intrinsic evils. This is because life is foundational to every other issue. Other issues deny someone of PART of his rights as a human person, but with murder, then someone is denied of ALL of his rights as a human person.

Practical implementation of the Catholic Principles concerning voting:

One can NEVER vote for someone BECAUSE one wants to PROMOTE an intrinsic evil that a candidate supports.

Examples: It would be gravely sinful to vote deliberately FOR a candidate BECAUSE the voter wishes to promote abortion “rights”, homosexual marriage or socialism. If the intention is to promote, knowingly and willingly, as good something the Church defines as intrinsically evil, then the voter would be committing mortal sin.

While Catholics are not “single issue” voters, a single issue CAN disqualify a candidate if that issue makes the candidate incapable of promoting the common good. Support for abortion is the prime example of an issue that disqualifies a candidate.

The reality is that one issue can outweigh many other issues if those issues are all dependent on this one issue, namely, LIFE.

It would be hard to imagine an evil that does greater harm to our society than that of abortion, which has snuffed out the lives of tens of millions of innocent persons in the United States alone, many times those killed in the Nazi death camps.

With gratitude to Father Martin Pitstick for this presentation.

October 18, 2020