

## CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE OUR VOTING

### 1) In Voting, especially for the President, our GOAL is to promote the COMMON GOOD

"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.

"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."

Pope Saint John Paul II, [The Gospel of Life encyclical](#)

### 2) To achieve this we must recognize that not all issues have equal weight and some issues are foundational.

There is a hierarchy of values. 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)

#### a. The difference between intrinsic evils and prudential judgements

##### i. Intrinsic evils: Some things are always wrong regardless of the circumstances.

Catholics must always agree on these issues to remain in good standing with the Catholic Church.

Examples of Intrinsic Evils that attack the Common Good: Abortion, Euthanasia, [Homosexual Marriage](#), Gender Confusion, [Socialism](#), Racism, Religious Persecution.

##### ii. Prudential judgements: Some issues require a consideration of the circumstances.

Catholics of good conscience can disagree on these issues. One could even disagree with the pope and bishops on a matter of prudential judgement and remain in good standing with the Catholic Church.

Examples of Prudential Judgement Issues: How to best care for the poor (entitlements vs. tax incentives for charitable giving); capital punishment; 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...

#### b. Foundational Issues that involve Intrinsic Evils

Among those issues which 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.<sup>1</sup>

##### i. Protection of innocent human life, the preeminent foundational issue for the common good

Overcoming direct threats against innocent human life (abortion & Euthanasia) is the "*fundamental human rights issue*" (US Bishops, [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 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." USCCB, [Introductory letter to Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#)

Defense against 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, capital punishment, immigration...) and even some other issues regarding intrinsic evils. This is

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<sup>1</sup> Any politics of human dignity must seriously address issues of racism, poverty, hunger, employment, education, housing, and health care. . . If we understand the human person as the "temple of the Holy Spirit"—the living house of God— then these 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. (Living the Gospel of Life, no. 22)

because life is foundational to every other issue. With other issues you are denying someone PART of their rights as a human person, when you kill them, you deny them ALL of their rights as a human person.

Analogy: if someone is attacking your child and trying to kill them, you don't stop to consider if your child has the best health care, or if you need a better job, or if your child is being discriminated against at school. You immediately stop the attack! At that moment, nothing is more important than protecting their life! This scenario aptly describes our country today. Our unborn are under attack through legalized abortion and over sixty million have been killed. We have it within our ability, at the voting booth, to come to their defense.

"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..."  
Pope Saint John Paul II, [The Gospel of Life](#)

ii. **Other foundational issues that involve defense against intrinsic evils: [Marriage](#), [Gender Confusion](#), [Religious Liberty](#), [Socialism](#)**

Those who have difficulty recognizing the intrinsic evil of the following three issues have the obligation to form their conscience according to church teaching. "*The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it.*" Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 2088

1. Marriage & Gender Confusion: "*It is profoundly immoral and unjust for the government to declare that two people of the same sex can constitute a marriage. The unique meaning of marriage as the union of one man and one woman is inscribed in our bodies as male and female... Mandating marriage redefinition across the country is a tragic error that harms the common good and most vulnerable among us, especially children.*" (USCCB Statement) Same sex "marriage" and gender confusion is a direct attack on the family, which is the basic building block of society. Pope Saint John Paul II said: "*As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live.*" When you destroy the family, society will soon follow. Marriage between one man and one woman is the foundation of the family. It is a good not only for the benefit of the partners, but also for the healthy rearing of children. It is given to us by God, who created us male and female. The state does not have the power to redefine marriage any more than it does to redefine gravity. History shows us that cultures that freely embrace homosexuality collapse after a few generations. These two issues are also used to persecute Christians who are accused of "discrimination," if they merely hold and practice Biblical beliefs common to all Christians for 2,000 years.
2. Religious Persecution: Religious Liberty is our first and most cherished liberty. This concept was part of the reason behind the founding of our country. Christian organizations and Christian owners of business are having to defend their religious liberty in court due to the unjust directives of previous administration and bad decisions by judges. The current administration has undone many of these attacks on religious liberty and appointed judges who will respect our religious liberty. His opponent has pledged to return to and intensify the religious persecution that began under the previous administration. Examples: HHS mandate; the closing of Catholic adoption agencies...
3. Socialism: "*No one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist*" wrote Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), for socialism is "*irreconcilable with true Christianity.*" Pope Leo XIII, in his encyclical, *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (1878), stated:

*"indeed, socialists, stealing the very Gospel itself with a view to deceive more easily the unwary, have been accustomed to distort it so as to suit their own purposes, nevertheless so great is the difference between their depraved teachings and the most pure doctrine of Christ that none greater could exist..."*

In another encyclical, *Rerum Novarum* (1891) Pope Leo explains that socialists "*rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community*" (RN, 4). Socialists "*strike at the interests of every wage-earner, since they would deprive him of the liberty of disposing of his wages, and thereby of all hope and possibility of increasing his resources and of bettering his condition in life*" (RN 5). Every person has "*by nature the right to possess property as his own.*" (RN 6)

Pope Saint John XXIII wrote in *Mater et Magistra* (1961) that "*no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism.*"

### 3) Practical implementation of the Catholic Principles concerning voting

- a. You can NEVER vote for someone BECAUSE you want to PROMOTE an intrinsic evil this person supports.

Examples: It would be gravely sinful to vote FOR a candidate BECAUSE you want to promote abortion “rights”, homosexual marriage, or socialism. If your intention is to promote as good something the church defines as intrinsically evil, you would be committing objective mortal sin.

- b. 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.

- c. The only scenario where one could vote for a candidate that supports an intrinsic evil that attacks the common good would be if:

- 1) you don't support the intrinsic evil they support,
- 2) AND all of the other candidates running against them are proportionally worse in the harm they would do to the common good.

Everything hinges however on knowing how to weigh the issues and this is where many people go wrong, thinking many issues on one side can outweigh one issue on the other side. **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 could do greater harm to our society than that of abortion, which has snuffed out the lives of 66+ million innocent lives (6 times those killed in the Nazi death camps).

In the prudential judgement of Cardinal Burke ([Our Civic Responsibility for the Common Good](#)), former head of the Vatican's highest court:

*“There is no element of the common good, no morally good practice, that a candidate may promote and to which a voter may be dedicated, which could justify voting for a candidate who also endorses and supports the deliberate killing of the innocent, abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia, human cloning or the recognition of a same-sex relationship as legal marriage. These elements are so fundamental to the common good that they cannot be subordinated to any other cause, no matter how good.”*

Think of the game “Jenga.” Not all of the blocks have equal importance in holding up the structure. If you remove the foundation piece, everything will come tumbling down. Protection of innocent human life is the foundation of our society. If someone can't be trusted to defend innocent human life, then they can't be trusted to get any issue right that affects the dignity of the human person.

Then there is the urgency of the matter involved. If there is an active shooter killing people, it is urgent to stop the killing. Abortion is like an active shooter on steroids!

With the number of innocent lives being lost, in the tens of millions, this becomes, as our bishops have told us, the “preeminent” issue demanding our attention.

We have a Christian duty to work for the greatest common good. This involves promoting good and limiting evil.



*“Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with the maximum determination” ~ Pope Saint John Paul II, [Christifideles Laici](#), 38.*

Analogy: consider if there are two calls to a fire department on opposite sides of town and they only have one fire truck. If one call can save 5 lives and the other 10,000 lives, you have the obligation to go where you can save the most number of lives.

So when you have the certain and immediate loss of tens of millions from ongoing abortions there is no combination of other issues that equal this threat. This does not mean that other threats are ignored, simply that you prioritize to save the most lives possible and defend the foundational issues for our society to survive.