

## We Choose Life



### Pro-Life Office

of the Diocese of Covington

#### Mission Statement

The Pro-Life Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington, guided by our bishop, promotes the sanctity and legal protection of human life from conception to natural death through prayer, pastoral care, public policy and education.

“Every child who, rather than being born, is condemned unjustly to being aborted, bears the face of Jesus Christ, bears the face of the Lord, who even before he was born, and then just after birth, experienced the world’s rejection. And every elderly person ... even if he is ill or at the end of his days, bears the face of Christ. They cannot be discarded, as the ‘culture of waste’ suggests!”

— Pope Francis

“God’s love does not differentiate between the newly conceived infant still in his or her mother’s womb and the child or young person, or the adult and the elderly person. God does not distinguish between them because he sees an impression of his own image and likeness (Gn 1:26) in each one.”

— Pope Benedict XVI

## The elephant in the voting booth

### Father Raymond Enzweiler

Contributor

Can you think of anyone with whom you always agree? Someone whose decisions you have never questioned, not even once? From our closest to remotest relationships, disagreements occur. Even Jesus wasn’t spared. Recall how Peter corrected Jesus just after proclaiming he was the Messiah and Son of God? No one can name a person with whom they’ve always agreed. It could have been a small matter or something very important. Regardless, we need to find ways to move forward with solutions that respect everyone involved.

Such points of disagreement are important when choosing someone to represent us. For example, if you are naming your health care surrogate, someone who could make life and death medical decisions for you, you would want that person to represent you and your beliefs well. You would want to know you can trust the decisions that person will make in your name. Issues like one’s position on surgery, ventilators or artificial hydration and nutrition are important. Would you choose someone to be your health care surrogate who believes euthanasia is not only a right but an obligation to society if you did not believe the same thing? Would you trust that person to make life and death decisions for you?

The same is true with elected officials. Certain issues give us a sense of how that person would respond in various other situations. They reveal the person’s values and principles. Since they are given the authority to make decisions for us, we want to vote for someone who will support the same values we hold.

In an ideal situation, if we disagree with a candidate, we would dis-

*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.” 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.*

— Excerpted from *Priorities at the Polls* by Most Rev. Joseph F. Naumann, chair of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities ([www.respectlife.org](http://www.respectlife.org))

agree with that candidate on all major issues. But, it is far more likely we will find ourselves disagreeing only on some issues. How are we to proceed in such situations, especially knowing that often the general assumption is that each vote is a “popular mandate” for everything the politician stands for.

Our bishops have given us some help with this dilemma in their document “Faithful Citizenship.” This document notes that our starting point is a well-formed conscience coupled with the virtue of prudence. The conscience is more than opinions or feelings or what I think is best. It uses our gift of reason to determine if an act is good — morally correct — according to the law God has written deep in our hearts. Through it, we can hear the voice of God guiding us to love, do good, and avoid evil. Prudence adds the ability to determine the best moral action to attain the good in a situation. The conscience determines if a particular act is good. Prudence determines the best action when there are multiple possible ways to attain that good.

Our conscience tells us we cannot support issues that are counter to good such as abortion, euthanasia, assisted suicide, deliberately subjecting workers or the poor to subhuman living conditions, redefining marriage in ways that violate its essential meaning, or racist behavior. They

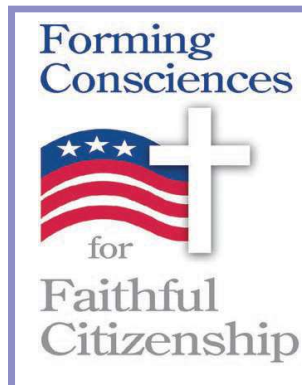
are counter to the dignity of the person, the value of human life and the God given rights that allow us to choose God and God’s love.

But they are not all equal. Some, like abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide, end a person’s life. They end the hope of tomorrow for the person killed. The person can no longer choose to respond to God and God’s gifts of love, grace and mercy. Nor is there any chance for others to help in Christian charity. Because these issues end life and all the future possibilities that life brings, they are most critical. And, among them, abortion has a preeminent priority.

The number of lives ended by abortion is staggering. According to the most current data, abortion ends the lives of over 2,000 unborn children every day in the United States. At the current abortion rate in this country, there are over 540,000 abortions in a nine-month period. Since 1973, over 61 million children have been aborted in our country alone. None of those children had the opportunity to live their lives outside the womb, to know and love God as God intended.

It is more than just the number of lives ended. It is ending the life of a child at the very beginning of human life, when the person is most vulnerable and innocent. It has impacted countless women and men as well. And, it occurs within the family, the building block of society. The family should be the center of safety and love and goodness. Abortion turns the family into a place of death. It is a reality so counter to what family means that it is undermining our very understanding of parent, child, family and society and destroying us in the process.

Does this mean the other issues counter to human dignity don’t mat-



The USCCB teaching document on political responsibility “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” is available online at [www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-faithful-citizenship-pdf](http://www.usccb.org/resources/forming-consciences-faithful-citizenship-pdf).

ter? Of course not. Indeed, part of the solution to ending abortion requires us to simultaneously respond to all the other social justice issues. In fact, the Catholic Church has never taken a “one issue only” stance.

“Faithful Citizenship,” numbers 34-37, notes there may be times when, for other truly grave moral reasons, prudence dictates the best path toward the human good means supporting a candidate who supports abortion or other evils. It does not mean giving tacit approval to the evil by remaining silent. It is incumbent upon us to make very clear we oppose the evil and work to overcome it. Such a decision is not easy. It requires a well-formed conscience and prudence. It requires balancing the lives of unborn children with no hope of tomorrow against those with the possibility of hope that tomorrow brings.

Our faith mandates we work to spread the Gospel and live Christ’s command to love others as he did. Our votes, like our actions, should reflect that mandate. It requires courage, determination and sacrifice. The stakes are high. Together, we can overcome all social injustice. But we cannot do it by ignoring the elephant in the room — the scourge of abortion.

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For more information about the Pro-Life Office or to be added to our e-mail newsgroups, visit us online at [www.covdio.org/prolife/](http://www.covdio.org/prolife/) or call (859) 392-1500.