



ARCHDIOCESE OF OMAHA

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ELECTION DAY, NOVEMBER 4TH: DECIDING THE VALUES THAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO US

Tuesday, November 4th is Election Day in our nation. As followers of Christ and citizens of this nation we have a serious moral obligation to promote the common good by exercising our right to vote. “The Gospel of Life must be proclaimed, and human life defended, in all places and all times. The arena for moral responsibility includes not only the halls of government but the voting booth as well. Every voice matters in the public forum. Every vote counts. . .” (USCCB, *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*, nos. 33-34).

As important as it is to vote, it is even more important that we vote according to a well-formed conscience, not self-interest or along party lines. “Catholics have a serious and lifelong obligation to form their consciences in accord with human reason and the teaching of the Church” (USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 17). At the core of Catholic moral and social teaching is respect for the sacred dignity of every human life. This teaching flows from our faith but also comes to us through the gift of human reason.

In this election, like many before it, we are faced with a conflict of values in candidates. There are many serious issues at stake in this election, but none is more important than abortion. Almost 50 million babies have been aborted in the United States since 1973, an unfathomable loss of human life that increases by more than a million every year. Furthermore, as Mother Teresa once pointed out, “abortion has pitted mothers against their children and women against men. It has sown violence and discord at the heart of the most intimate human relationships. . . It has portrayed the greatest of gifts—a child—as a competitor, an intrusion, and an inconvenience” (*Letter to U.S. Supreme Court*, February, 1994).

Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has stated with clarity that Catholics who vote for a candidate precisely because he or she supports abortion and/or euthanasia would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil. It is also true that if a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, a vote for that candidate could be permitted “in the presence of proportionate reasons” (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion: General Principles*, no. 6). However, I cannot conceive of a proportionate reason that could outweigh the deaths of nearly 50 million children killed by abortion.

We are surely not one-issue people because we have to be concerned about the well-being of everyone in our society, and especially those who are hurting and in need. We have to be concerned about women with unplanned pregnancies who are without the resources to give birth or to care for their babies. We are rightfully concerned about candidates for public office who do not seem to care about babies after they are born and their mothers, and their future welfare. But the very first right we must protect, if all human rights are to be protected, is the right to life for the unborn. Those who do not understand or accept this basic human right are unworthy of our trust.

The stakes are high for all of us in this coming general election. It is up to us as individual voters to study the issues, examine the position of the candidates, pray before we enter the voting booth, and then cast our ballot in accord with consciences that are formed by the values and principles of our Catholic faith. May the Lord bless you and our great nation.

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