

Catholics and Election 2012

In the past eight decades, Christians, especially *Catholic* Christians, have been repeatedly challenged by changes in American society that are opposed to both the laws of nature and the divinely law revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Dismal milestones along the journey into what Pope John Paul II termed a “culture of death” include:



- Non-Catholic churches begin “acceptance” of contraceptives in the 1930’s and especially birth control pills in the 1960’s,
- Country-wide legalized abortion begins in 1973 (Roe versus Wade)
- Embryonic stem cell research begins in the 1990’s
- Assisted suicide is legalized in some states in recent years
- Euthanasia is legalized in some Europe countries

Each has corrupted society progressively, in our country, and throughout much of the Western world; further, Western countries, via taxes of their own citizens, provide “aid” to developing countries which includes contraceptives. Over this same period of time, our society has weakened protection of traditional marriage, beginning with “no-fault” divorce laws in the 1960’s and 1970’s, legalized “gay marriage” in some states, and even now we hear disturbing voices which advocate legalized incest and polygamy.

If all this were not enough, the freedom to practice religion is now under threat with the Department of Health and Human Services’ mandate, a requirement under law, as part of “Obamacare,” that all employers are compelled to provide employees with insurance that covers contraception, sterilization, and drug-induced abortion at no cost (not even a co-pay) to the employees. By defining such drugs and procedures as “health care,” which increases the cost of insurance to all, more importantly, such “care” violates the conscience and deepest beliefs of Catholics and many other Christians. Pregnancy is, after all, not an illness. The unborn is a distinct human being and has his or her own right to life from the moment of conception. (Of course, pre-natal and post-natal care of new mothers should be part of any comprehensive health insurance plan.)

Faithful Catholics are obligated to follow Church teaching on life and family issues, and consider their importance in voting for candidates, in local, state, and national elections. As voters (an obligation), we Catholics are to have formed our consciences in conformity with Church teaching so as to cast our vote for those candidates who are “pro-life” and “pro-traditional family” over candidates who are “pro-choice and inclusive” when it comes to, first, abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide, and, second, “pro-traditional marriage versus “pro-gay marriage.” The right to life of yet unborn children is the first human right, taking priority over other issues. Additionally, traditional marriage, of one man and one woman, is also a fundamental human right, complementing the right to life. Further, there is the additional concern regarding freedom of religion, a right recognized in the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution, which is threatened by the HHS mandate.

In preparing for election this November, we Catholics are to study the platforms and pray over the candidates for each elected office. Then, we are obligated to vote for

those candidates who are best positioned to produce legislation which will protect the unborn and their mothers, the elderly and handicapped from euthanasia, and the mentally afflicted from assisted suicide. We are also to take protection of traditional marriage into account. Ideally, the pro-life and pro-marriage candidate will also be committed to serving the poor and immigrants, the hungry and the homeless, will be opposed to the death penalty, and support bills which will restore fiscal responsibility, encourage economic growth, provide stability in funding social security and medical care of the elderly, veterans, and the disabled, and prudential national security. Do such ideal candidates exist? Probably not, and, chances are that Catholics can disagree about how to accomplish these goals. Nevertheless, the first human right, that of life, must take priority over other issues when it comes to deciding how to vote. After all, if life is taken from a person before birth, that girl or boy cannot exercise any other rights. If we keep this principle in mind, it might help us to see more clearly the other moral dimensions of public life and the reason for Church teaching.

Let us seek and pray that we vote in accord with a fully-formed Catholic conscience, for those who will protect the unborn, the elderly, and the poor, to their maximum capabilities and will preserve religious liberty.

Let us ask the intercession of St. Joan of Arc, St. Thomas More, and St. Louis IX, each of whom fought the good fight, that this country may once again be a beacon of freedom and life, and that we in our own time will triumph over the shadows of darkness and death which penetrate all too deeply into our culture, our parishes, and our families. Let us also ask the Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw those who have been caught up in the deathly vocations, to seek the light of his forgiveness, leave the abortion clinics behind, and be fully reconciled with him and the Father, who live forever and ever. Amen.

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For more information on Catholic teaching on these issues, please visit these websites:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, www.usccb.org
- Colorado Catholic Conference, <http://www.cocatholicconference.org/>
- Archdiocese of Denver, www.archden.org.