

THE FIVE NON-NEGOTIABLES

These five current issues concern actions that are intrinsically evil and must never be promoted by the law. Intrinsically evil actions are those that fundamentally conflict with the moral law and can never be deliberately performed under any circumstances. It is a mortal sin to deliberately endorse or promote any of these actions (CCC 1855, 1857), and no candidate who really wants to advance the common good will support any action contrary to the non-negotiable principles involved in these issues.

1. Abortion

The Church teaches that, regarding a law permitting abortions, it is "never licit to obey it, or to take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or to vote for it" (EV 73). Abortion is the intentional and direct killing of an innocent human being, and therefore it is a form of homicide.

The unborn child is always an innocent party, and no law may permit the taking of his life. Even when a child is conceived through rape or incest, the fault is not the child's, who should not suffer death for others' sins.

2. Euthanasia

Often disguised by the name "mercy killing," euthanasia is also a form of homicide. No person has a right to take his own life, and no one has the right to take the life of any innocent person.

In euthanasia, the ill or elderly are killed, by action or omission, out of a misplaced sense of compassion, but true compassion cannot include intentionally doing something intrinsically evil to another person (cf. EV 73).

3. Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Human embryos are human beings. "Respect for the dignity of the human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo" (CRF 4b).

Recent scientific advances show that often medical treatments that researchers hope to develop from experimentation on embryonic stem cells can be developed by using adult stem cells instead. Adult stem cells can be obtained without doing harm to the adults from whom they come. Thus there is no valid medical argument in favor of using embryonic stem cells. And even if there were benefits to be had from such experiments, they would not justify destroying innocent embryonic humans.

4. Human Cloning

"Attempts . . . for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission,' cloning, or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union" (RHL I:6).

Human cloning also involves abortion because the "rejected" or "unsuccessful" embryonic clones are destroyed, yet each clone is a human being.

5. Homosexual "Marriage"

True marriage is the union of one man and one woman. Legal recognition of any other union as "marriage" undermines true marriage, and legal recognition of homosexual unions actually does homosexual persons a disfavor by encouraging them to persist in what is an objectively immoral arrangement.

"When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic lawmaker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral" (UHP 10).

HOW NOT TO VOTE

1. Do not vote based just on your political party affiliation, your earlier voting habits, or your family's voting tradition. Years ago, these may have been trustworthy ways to determine whom to vote for, but today they are often not reliable. You need to look at the stands each candidate takes. This means that you may end up casting votes for candidates from more than one party.

2. Do not cast your vote based on candidates' appearance, personality, or "media savvy." Some attractive, engaging, and "sound-bite-capable" candidates endorse intrinsic evils, while other candidates, who may be

plain-looking, uninspiring, and ill at ease in front of cameras, endorse legislation in accord with basic Christian principles.

3. Do not vote for candidates simply because they declare themselves to be Catholic. Unfortunately, many self-described Catholic candidates reject basic Catholic moral teaching.
4. Do not choose among candidates based on "What's in it for me?" Make your decision based on which candidates seem most likely to promote the common good, even if you will not benefit directly or immediately from the legislation they propose.
5. Do not vote for candidates who are right on lesser issues but will vote wrongly on key moral issues. One candidate may have a record of voting in line with Catholic values except for, say, euthanasia. Such a voting record is a clear signal that the candidate should not be chosen by a Catholic voter unless the other candidates have voting records even less in accord with these moral norms.

HOW TO VOTE

1. For each office, first determine how each candidate stands on each of the issues that will come before him and involve non-negotiable principles.
2. Rank the candidates according to how well their positions align with these non-negotiable moral principles.
3. Give preference to candidates who do not propose positions that contradict these principles.
4. Where every candidate endorses positions contrary to non-negotiable principles, choose the candidate likely to do the least harm. If several are equal, evaluate them based on their views on other, lesser issues.
5. Remember that your vote today may affect the offices a candidate later achieves.

WHEN NO "ACCEPTABLE" CANDIDATE IS AVAILABLE

In some political races, each candidate takes a wrong position on one or more issues involving non-negotiable moral principles. In such a case you may vote for the candidate who takes the fewest such positions or who seems least likely to be able to advance immoral legislation, or you may choose to vote for no one.

Catholics must strive to put in place candidates, laws, and political programs that are in full accord with non-negotiable moral values. Where a perfect candidate, law, or program is not on the table, we are to choose the best option, the one that promotes the greatest good and entails the least evil. Not voting may sometimes be the only moral course of action, but we must consider whether not voting actually promotes good and limits evil in a specific instance. The role of citizens and elected officials is to promote intrinsic moral values as much as possible today while continuing to work toward better candidates, laws, and programs in the future.

ABBREVIATIONS

CCC *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

CPL Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Notes on Some Questions regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*

CRF Pontifical Council for the Family, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*

EV John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* (The Gospel of Life)

RHL Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Respect for Human Life in Its Origin and on the Dignity of Procreation*

UHP Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions between Homosexual Persons*

PASS IT ON!