

## CATHOLICS VOTING CATHOLIC

As the year A.D. 2020 passes, it will make strange history, a year to evade rather than embrace. Yet, as we are facing the remainder of the election season of 2020, we must face it without fear and in prayer; walking through it in confidence. There are too many possibilities, and with the Nation divided between camps of good and evil and right and wrong, I pray to God that right order and peace in society will prevail.

The citizens of the United States face choices for president and vice-president, along with congressional candidates for both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, along with countless state and local races.

A well-written article about the upcoming election was published on September 18, 2020 in *Crisis Magazine*, entitled “A Thomist’s Guide to the 2020 Election” by Daniel Waldow, a doctoral candidate in Theology at Duquesne University. A link to the article can be found [here](#).

In summary, Mr. Waldow references several major sources, as a guide to a Catholic to consider voting in the upcoming 2020 elections. These include (1) Pope St. John Paul’s encyclical entitled *Evangelium Vitae* (paragraphs 68-74); (2) as Prefect for the Congregation of Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger’s (Benedict XVI) doctrinal note issued in 2002 on “[The Participation of Catholics in Political Life](#),” (3) Cardinal Ratzinger’s 2004 letter to Mr. McCarrick (then Cardinal McCarrick) entitled “[Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion](#)”; (4) St. Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica, ST I-II, q. 94, a. 2*, dealing with human happiness, moral virtues, and relationships; and, (5) the St. Thomas’s famous work on the function of human government entitled *De Regno*.

As Catholics we are called to engage in a Christian life, which is radically *contra mundum* to the secular worldview. Our political life is but an expression of that Christian life. In his work “The Participation of Catholics in Political Life,” Cardinal Ratzinger calls Catholics to give a Christian witness to the Christian principles, and to live in accord with a well-formed conscience, in fidelity with legitimate authority, with the reality that politics cannot be separated from morality and the natural law.

Cardinal Ratzinger also nailed it in his 2004 work on the “Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion,” most relevant to Catholics in 2020 in deciding who to vote for, where he called to mind and heart each Catholic should ask before receiving Holy Communion: (1) Am I in full communion with the Catholic Church, (2) Am I guilty of a grave (mortal) sin? He notes that abortion and euthanasia are grave sins, wherein he references human law, and stating that Catholics cannot work for, endorse, or otherwise campaign for evil that is contrary to God’s law; and that

Catholics should never cooperate in such evil. The Cardinal notes that not all moral issues “have the same weight” as abortion and euthanasia. He stated that a Catholic can be at “odds with the Holy Father with the application of capital punishment or on a decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to present himself to receive Holy Communion.” He also noted that a Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation of evil, and unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion, if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidates’ permissive stand on abortion and/or euthanasia.

In paragraphs 68-74 of Pope St. John Paul II’s encyclical entitled *Evangelium Vitae*, the issues he addresses are as vital in 2020 as they were in the 1990s. Noteworthy in modern politics is the “attacks on human life. . . [which] consists in the trend to demand legal justification for them[.]” The “proportional approach” as John Paul II notes—a prevailing political view in the United States—is that the life of an unborn person or a seriously disabled person is only a relative one a life put on the balance with other values; that leaves the choice to a person present and concretely involved in the morally subjective situation as the one who “can correctly judge the goods at stake” and the State and the community must defer to that subjective choice. (Paragraph 68).

These false ideas of liberty lead to death of countless millions, contrary to “[t]he real purpose of civil law [which] is to guarantee an ordered coexistence in true justice.” (Paragraph 71).

Christians must not be forced to cooperate with the implementation of unjust laws (Paragraph 74); which include among others the right to life.

In St. Thomas’ *De Regno*, he teaches that the proper governance by a civil authority, is to learn and govern the way of divine government of the world. In other words, civil government must be maintained to its ultimate purpose, which is to govern so that man lives together in a virtuous life in this world. Those who promote abortion and euthanasia cooperate with evil in a way that is contrary to the Divine law, right order, and the common good. For a clear statement as to the duties of civil government, look to the Book of Romans, Chapter 13.

In closing, with the goal of right order and peace in society, it is right and good for each Catholic to measure the standards set out in Catholic teaching, and as citizens of a republic in the United States, to exercise each respective vote in accordance with a right-formed conscience, guided by the divine and natural law.