



DIOCESE OF FAIRBANKS

1316 Peger Road • Fairbanks, Alaska • 99709 • 907-374-9500 • Fax: 907-374-9580

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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Introduction to Voter's Guide

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

With Election Day just a few weeks away, I invite you to join me in prayerfully reflecting on our civic responsibilities as Catholics. With a properly formed conscience and guidance from the Holy Spirit, we can conscientiously discharge our duties as citizens in November when we vote not just for a president and vice president, but for our representatives in Congress and local governments, too. To assist you in this discernment process, our diocese is providing parishes with *The Issues, The Candidates, and Your Vote 2020*, a resource to help you evaluate candidates according to Catholic teaching.

It should go without saying that we have a paramount responsibility as Catholics to support candidates who will protect and defend human life from conception to natural death. Pope St. John Paul II wrote, "The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life." During my six years as Bishop of Fairbanks, I have preached and written repeatedly on this issue, since so much of our society's ills are rooted in a disregard for the innate dignity of every human being. We are sacred beings for the simple reason that God created us and ignoring this truth has led to some of the greatest moral crises of our times, as well as to great suffering for individuals and families.

As Catholics, then, we can never morally support or vote for candidates, laws, or initiatives that will maintain or increase access to abortion, euthanasia, or assisted suicide. Society proposes that we eliminate problems by eliminating people, but as Pope Francis affirmed in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, "It is not 'progressive' to try to resolve problems by eliminating a human life."

What about candidates who support abortion rights but nonetheless also support life-affirming laws that help the poor or protect the environment? The Church is also clear on this issue: Catholics may not morally vote for a candidate who supports abortion just because they agree with the candidate on other, less important issues. Catholic social teaching, which includes our obligation to protect and increase the quality of life for others through the corporal works of mercy, is a serious issue that Jesus made clear we cannot ignore and expect to be welcomed into heaven. We should always strive to vote for candidates and laws that will help the most vulnerable among us obtain their basic needs, and that includes education and healthcare.

But protecting life itself must always take precedence when we are deciding who will best represent us. People of good will can disagree on how best to assist the poor or be good stewards of creation, because these are prudential issues and there can be more than one righteous solution. But some acts, such as taking human life through abortion, euthanasia, or assisted suicide, are always objectively wrong no matter the circumstances and we can never support them as Catholics.

Finally, I want to remind the faithful that we are not morally obligated to settle for the “lesser of two evils” when voting. Regrettably, the United States’ political system has, for practical purposes, evolved into a two-party system. This leaves many Catholics trying to support candidates who will best promote a true culture of life feeling as if there is no satisfying--or even licit--choice offered by either party. If your conscience leads you to that conclusion, then you have a moral right to cast your vote for a third-party candidate. To those who would accuse those individuals of “throwing away their vote” or blame them for “putting the worse candidate in office,” I must remind you that pragmatism is not our highest value as Catholics--righteousness is:

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”
Matthew 6:33

In Christ,



†Most Reverend Chad W. Zielinski
Catholic Bishop of Northern Alaska
Diocese of Fairbanks



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