

Pastor's Notes: Pastoral Letter from Bishop Johnston

October 25, 2020

With the coming elections, I would like to share with you the second half of the pastoral letter written by Bishop Johnston of Kansas City-St. Joseph, a son of our diocese who once served at St. Jude, whom we knew as Fr. Vann Johnston. The beginning of the pastoral letter was given in last week's pastor's notes.



Pastoral Letter: Preparing to Vote, by Bishop James V. Johnston, Jr. of Kansas City-St. Joseph –Part 2 of 2

In Perspective

I encourage you to study prayerfully the political platforms of the parties. Each party clearly states their position on critical life issues such as abortion, destructive research on human embryos, euthanasia and assisted suicide, the appointment of judges and Supreme Court Justices and conscience rights. Each party clearly states whether they will support or defund Planned Parenthood as well as their position regarding laws such as the Hyde Amendment that bars the use of federal funds to support abortion. Each party states the criteria they will use to nominate judges and justices. Each party states where it stands on subjects that impact the family such as how sex education, orientation and gender identity will be taught in our public schools. Each party has staked out its position on upholding or weakening religious liberty and the freedom of believers and churches to live according to religious beliefs and carry out ministries and services without coercion and the threat of penalty. Although individual candidates' positions and actions do not always and everywhere correspond to their respective party platforms, platforms do offer a good insight into the agendas of the candidates and how they intend to use power if elected.

Again, there can be legitimate debate between parties and candidates as to the best *policy* to address an issue; however, this is not the same as disagreement on fundamental *principles*. The question prayerfully to ask ourselves then, is whether it is permissible to vote for a candidate whose positions oppose the truth of fundamental *principles* because one likes the candidate's *policy* stance on other issues.

Conclusion

Finally, as voting is an important moral decision, we must also be mindful of the words of Jesus that "*My kingdom does not belong to this world*" (Jn 18:36) and who rejected the temptation in the desert to embrace worldly temporal power (Lk 4:5-8). Our salvation does not lie in earthly political power or party. The Church exists to evangelize and to call our fallen world to conversion, to point us to our true and lasting home which lies beyond this world.

This brief letter does not say everything that could be said, but I hope that it initiates the process that each person must undertake to prepare their conscience for the moral act of voting.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph

The beginning of this letter was included in the pastor's notes on October 18, 2020.