



Vote Your Faith

Christianity and the Ballot Box

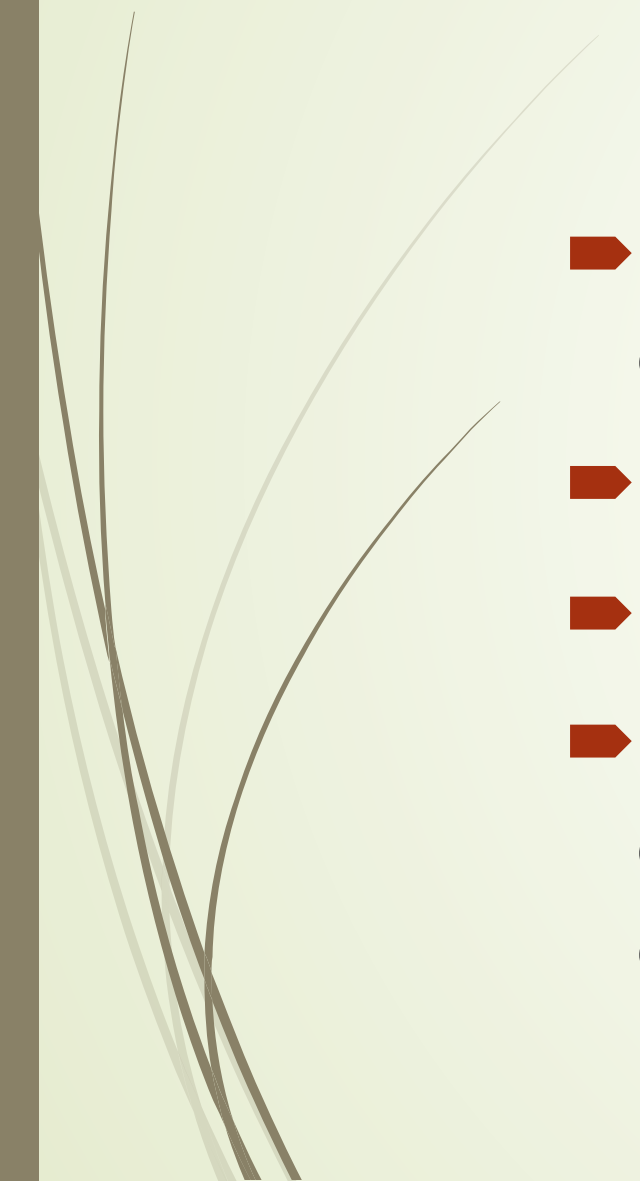


Imperfect Candidates

- Unless Jesus and the Blessed Mother are on the ballot, we are always going to be choosing imperfect candidates.
 - In this life, everything—including politics—is a messy mixture of good and evil, of virtue and sin, of truth and falsehood.
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Do Not Lose Interest!

- But, there are always differences between candidates.
 - We may feel one is as bad as the other.
 - We must not lose interest in the process.
 - This is an occasion for focusing even more effort on learning the positions of the candidates.
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Values and Viewpoints Matter

- Candidates should focus on distinguishing themselves from their opponent.
 - They have done and said things to highlight the differences.
 - One is always going to be closer to our values and viewpoints than the other.
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Parties Matter, Too

- Also look at the differences between the parties that candidates represent.
- Each party is an entire universe of:
 - Philosophies
 - Ideologies
 - Causes
 - Positions
 - People



Spheres of Influence

- ➔ Each party is a whole army of people who are going to surround and advise the candidate, and fill many positions of influence if that candidate is elected.
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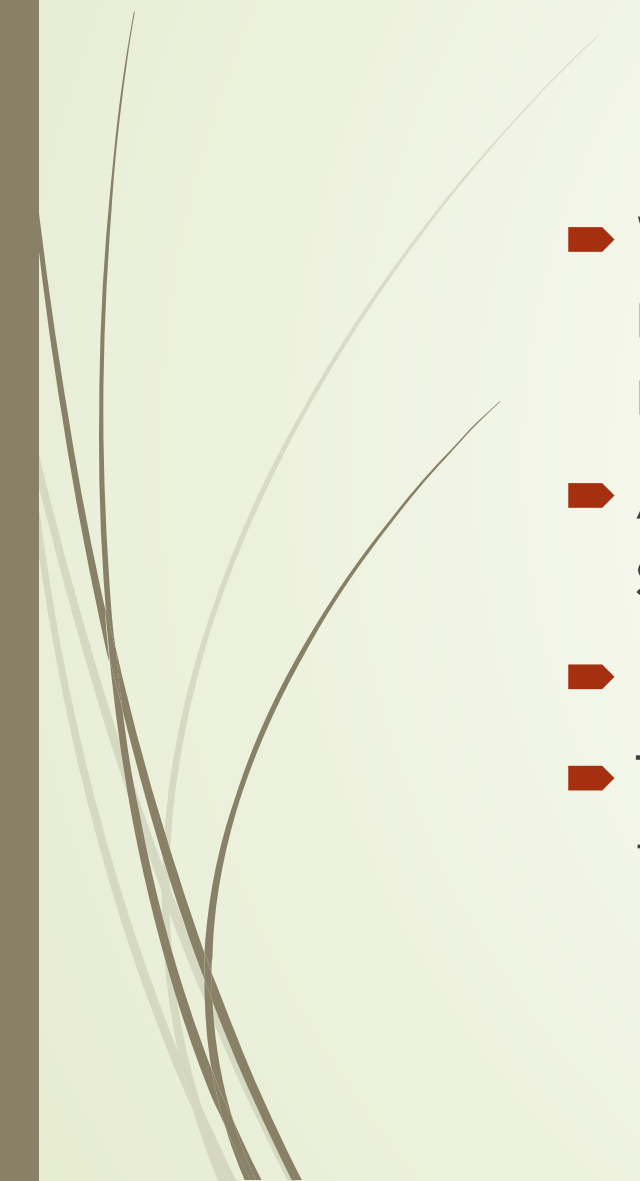


Appointments

- ▶ In a presidential race, for example, we have to ask what kind of appointments will a candidate make:
 - ▶ Cabinet
 - ▶ Major Bureaucrats
 - ▶ Military Leaders
 - ▶ Supreme Court Justices
 - ▶ Federal Judges




The Office Shapes the Candidate

- ▶ We must ask what direction they lean towards on the most fundamental issues of life, religious freedom, marriage and family.
 - ▶ And again, what direction their party leans on those same issues.
 - ▶ It's not just the candidate who shapes the office.
 - ▶ The office—and the party they represent—also shapes the candidate.
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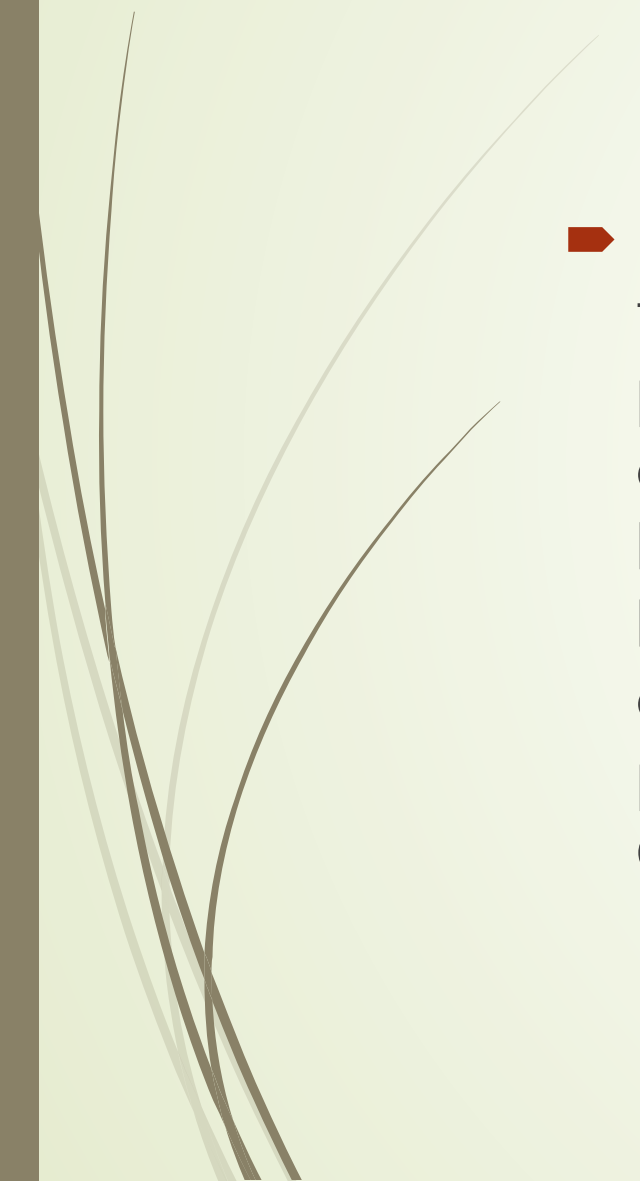


Patience is a Virtue!

- ▶ We have to be patient with ourselves and the process.
 - ▶ We must carefully choose the person and party who are closest to our values...starting with the most important issues.
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Conscience Aided by Prudence

- ▶ “Decisions about political life are complex and require the exercise of a well-formed conscience aided by prudence. This exercise of conscience begins with outright opposition to laws and other policies that violate human life or weaken its protection. Those who knowingly, willingly, and directly support public policies or legislation that undermine fundamental moral principles cooperate with evil.” (USCCB, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” n. 31)
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Every Voice Matters...Every Vote Counts

- ▶ Voting is a moral obligation.
- ▶ Participation in the political process is a virtue.
- ▶ “We encourage all citizens, particularly Catholics, to embrace their citizenship not merely as a duty and privilege, but as an opportunity meaningfully to participate in building the culture of life. Every voice matters in the public forum. Every vote counts.” (USCCB, “Living the Gospel of Life,” n. 34)




The Runaway Train

- What if both candidates will do damage?
 - Think of the analogy of the runaway train.
 - You are at the controls but you can't stop it.
 - But what you can do is change the track that it's on.
 - At the end of one track, you know it will kill a large number of people.
 - At the end of the another track, you know it will kill a small number of people.
 - What would you do?
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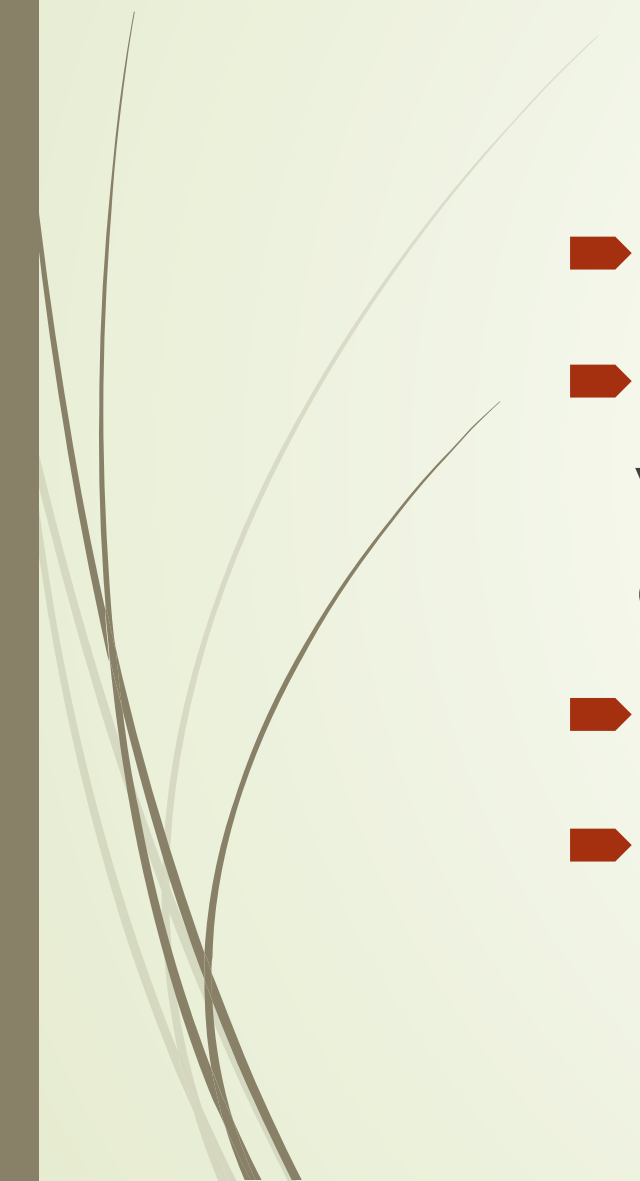


Changing the Track

- You do not **want** (intention) to kill anyone.
 - But, you cannot stop the train.
 - Obviously, you'd change the train to the track where the train is going to do the least amount of damage.
 - You're not choosing to kill anyone—the death and destruction are beyond your **intentions** and beyond your ability to stop.
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A Good Choice

- You are able to decrease the damage.
 - By changing the train to the track where it will do less damage, you are not choosing evil.
 - You are choosing to limit evil.
 - That choice is good!
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Certainty vs. Doubt

- We speak of the difference between certainty and doubt.
 - Very often elections present us with the choice between a candidate we know we don't want and an alternative about whom we're not sure.
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Preponderance of the Evidence

- Moral certitude that a candidate will do what's right is not required.
 - If they lean in the right direction, if there is a probability or even a possibility that they will do the right thing and make the right choices, that is better than the certainty of someone who will make the wrong choices.
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Choose the Good!

- When faced with the choice between a certain evil and a possible good, **you choose the possible good.**

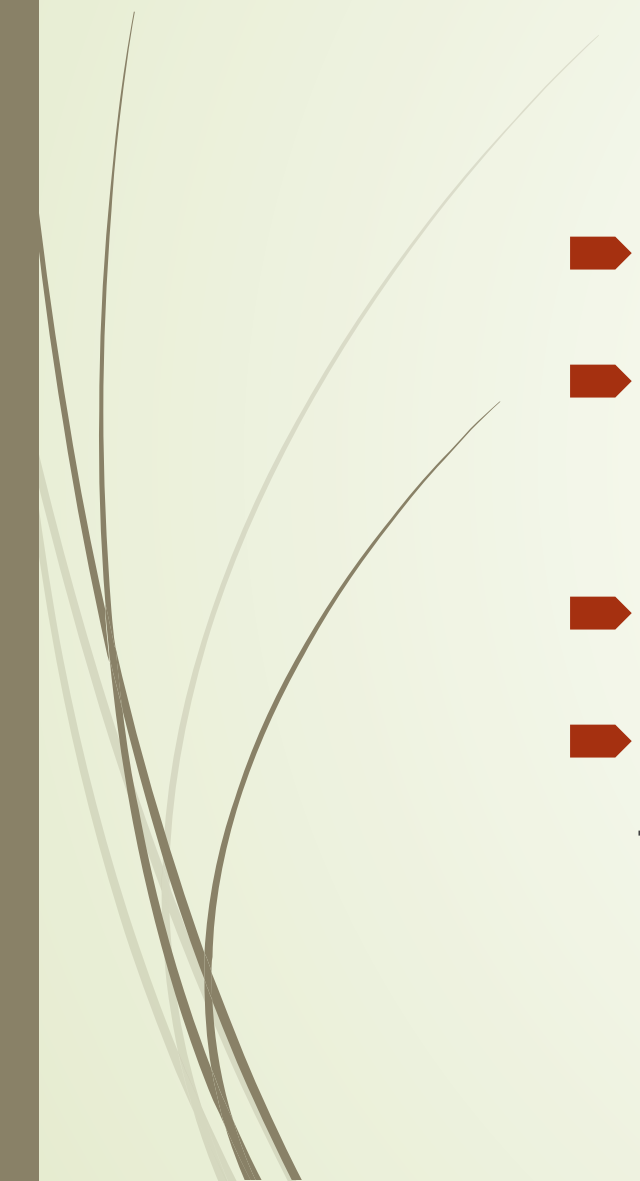


Influence Society

- Our vote is not meant to make us feel good.
 - Our vote is meant to influence society in the right direction by electing people who will help make that happen.
 - A vote is not an opinion poll about what we think of a candidate.
 - A vote is a transfer of power.
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Using Good Judgment

- Voting is a gamble.
 - God does not always give us clear, predictable choices.
 - He expects us to use good judgment
 - Good judgment helps us to avoid evils that are certain, and increase the possibilities of good.
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The Bottom Line

- We should never skip elections; we should vote.
- We influence elections whether we like it or not.
- Skipping a vote influences an election by taking a vote away from the better of two candidates.
- Don't sit out the election.
- Go and vote, and help change the train to the best available track!