

## Bishops on Pro-Life Voting

The failure to protect life in its most vulnerable stages renders suspect any claims to the ‘rightness’ of positions in other matters affecting the poorest and least powerful of the human community. If we understand the human person as ‘the temple of the Holy Spirit’ – the living house of God – then these latter issues fall logically into place as the crossbeams and walls of that house. *All direct attacks on innocent human life, such as abortion and euthanasia, strike at the house’s foundation.* These directly and immediately violate the human person’s most fundamental right – the right to life. Neglect of these issues is the equivalent of building our house on sand.

~ **Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics, 23.** ~

<p><b>Justin Cardinal Rigali</b>, Archbishop of Philadelphia Chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities</p>	<p>"We can't reduce abortions by promoting abortion.... No one who sponsors or supports legislation like FOCA can credibly claim to be part of a good-faith discussion on how to reduce abortions." <a href="#">USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities</a></p> <p>"The transcending issue of our day is the intentional destruction of innocent human life, as in abortion. We wish with all our hearts that no candidate and no party were advocating this heinous act against the human person. However, since it is a transcending issue, and even supported in its most extreme and horrific forms, we must proclaim time and time again that no intrinsic evil can ever be supported in any way, most especially when it concerns the gravest of all intrinsic evils: the taking of an innocent life." <a href="#">The Catholic Standard and Times</a></p>
<p><b>Charles J. Chaput</b>, Archbishop of Denver <b>James Conley</b>, Auxiliary Bishop of Denver</p>	<p>"Abortion is a foundational issue; it is not an issue like housing policy or the price of foreign oil. It always involves the intentional killing of an innocent life, and it is always, grievously wrong." <a href="#">Archdiocese of Denver</a></p>
<p><b>Joseph F. Naumann</b>, Archbishop of Kansas City <b>Robert W. Finn</b>, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph</p>	<p>"Could a Catholic in good conscience vote for a candidate who supports legalized abortion when there is a choice of another candidate who does not support abortion or any other intrinsically evil policy? Could a voter’s preference for the candidate’s positions on the pursuit of peace, economic policies benefiting the poor, support for universal health care, a more just immigration policy, etc. overcome a candidate’s support for legalized abortion? In such a case, the Catholic voter must ask and answer the question: What could possibly be a proportionate reason for the more than 45 million children killed by abortion in the past 35 years? Personally, we cannot conceive of such a proportionate reason." <a href="#">The Catholic Key</a></p>

<p><b>Robert Hermann</b>, Bishop of St. Louis</p>	<p>"Do some of our so-called good Catholics, who may go to Mass every Sunday and receive the Holy Eucharist, really believe that voting for a pro-abortion candidate, when there is a clear alternative and therefore no justifiable reason for so doing, is really not voting to have children killed? This election is all about saving our children!"  <a href="#">St. Louis Review Online</a></p> <p>"My desire for a good economy cannot justify my voting to remove all current restrictions on abortion. My desire to end the war in Iraq cannot justify my voting to remove all current restrictions on abortion."</p> <p>"The Catholic Church teaches, in its catechism, in the works of Pope John Paul II and in the writings of Pope Benedict XVI, that the issue of life is the most basic issue and must be given priority over the issue of the economy, the issue of war or any other issue. These same teachings inform us that when both candidates permit the right to abortion, but unequally so, we must chose to mitigate the evil by choosing the candidate who is less permissive of abortion."  <a href="#">St. Louis Review Online</a></p>
<p><b>José Gomez</b>, Archbishop of San Antonio</p>	<p>"...abortion is an issue that affects all segments of our society. It represents the primary right guaranteed in our Declaration of Independence - the right to life. Unless we protect this fundamental right of each human person, at all stages of life, no other issue or liberty matters."  <a href="#">Archdiocese of San Antonio</a></p>
<p><b>Joseph Francis Martino</b>, Bishop of Scranton</p>	<p>Being "right" on taxes, education, health care, immigration, and the economy fails to make up for the error of disregarding the value of a human life. Consider this: the finest health and education systems, the fairest immigration laws, and the soundest economy do nothing for the child who never sees the light of day. It is a tragic irony that "pro-choice" candidates have come to support homicide – the gravest injustice a society can tolerate – in the name of "social justice."  <a href="#">Diocese of Scranton</a></p>

<p><b>Joseph F. Naumann</b>, Archbishop of Kansas City  <b>Ronald M. Gilmore</b>, Bishop of Dodge City  <b>Paul S. Coakley</b>, Bishop of Salina  <b>Michael O. Jackels</b>, Bishop of Wichita</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>joined by</b></p> <p><b>Charles Chaput</b>, Archbishop of Denver  <b>Arthur N. Taffoy</b>, Bishop of Pueblo  <b>Michael J. Sheridan</b>, Bishop of Colorado Springs</p>	<p>"So, when there is no choice of a candidate that avoids supporting intrinsically evil actions, especially elective abortion, we should vote in such a way as to allow the least harm to innocent human life and dignity. We would not be acting immorally therefore if we were to vote for a candidate who is not totally acceptable in order to defeat one who poses an even greater threat to human life and dignity."</p> <p><a href="#">Kansas Catholic Conference</a>  <a href="#">Archdiocese of Denver</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Robert Vasa</b>, Bishop of Baker</p>	<p>"The conditions under which an individual may be able to vote for a pro-abortion candidate would apply only if all the candidates are equally pro-abortion."</p> <p><a href="#">LifeSiteNews</a></p> <p>"This consistent ethic is sometimes interpreted to mean that life issues as divergent as capital punishment and abortion, or assisted suicide and the loss of life in the war in Iraq, are equivalent. Nothing could be further from the truth. Certainly in each of these instances, regrettably, a human life is at stake but the difference is that only in the case of abortion or assisted suicide do we deal with the direct and intentional taking of the life of a completely innocent person.</p> <p>A person may work very admirably to alleviate poverty but this does not justify ignoring the greatest poverty which is the one which fails to recognize the value of life. A person may work very admirably to promote social justice but this does not justify turning a blind eye to the greatest injustice openly operative in our society which is the unjust deprivation of the pre-born of their most basic constitutional right, the right to life."</p> <p><a href="#">Catholic Sentinel</a></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thomas J. Tobin</b>, Bishop of Providence</p>	<p>"...I could never vote for a candidate – of any party for any office – who supports laws that promote or allow the death of thousands of children in the hideous crime of abortion. I just don't want that on my conscience."</p> <p><a href="#">Rhode Island Catholic</a></p>

<p><b>Robert W. Finn</b>, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph</p>	<p>"...we can never vote for a candidate <b>because</b> of his or permissive stand on abortion. At the same time, if we are inclined to vote for someone <b>despite</b> their pro-abortion stance, it seems we are morally obliged to establish a proportionate reason sufficient to justify the destruction of 45 million human persons through abortion. If we learn that our "candidate of choice" further pledges – through an instrument such as FOCA - to eliminate all existing limitations against abortion, it is that much more doubtful whether voting for him or her can ever be morally justified under any circumstance."  <a href="#">The Catholic Key</a></p>
<p><b>Elden F. Curtiss</b>, Archbishop of Omaha</p>	<p>"In this election, like many before it, we are faced with a conflict of values in candidates. There are many serious issues at stake in this election, but none is more important than abortion..."</p> <p>We are surely not one-issue people because we have to be concerned about the well-being of everyone in our society, and especially those who are hurting and in need...But the very first right we must protect, if all human rights are to be protected, is the right to life for the unborn. Those who do not understand or accept this basic human right are unworthy of our trust."  <a href="#">Archdiocese of Omaha</a></p>
<p><b>Francis Cardinal George</b>, Archbishop of Chicago President of the USCCB</p>	<p>"...there are many ways of being pro-life, but none of them has the same priority as the question of abortion or euthanasia."</p> <p>"If you've got an immoral law, you've got to work to change that. You've got children being killed every day. It goes on forever. That's the great scandal, and that's why there's such a sense of urgency now. There's no recognition of the fact that children continue to be killed, and we live, therefore, in a country drenched in blood. This can't be something that you start playing off pragmatically against other issues."  <a href="#">National Catholic Reporter</a></p>
<p><b>Samuel Aquila</b>, Bishop of Fargo</p>	<p>"As bad as the economy is, as bad as the war is, the destruction of innocent human life, especially in the womb, is a greater evil, and correction of this grave evil must take place. Each of us has a role in making this correction in our duties as citizens."  <a href="#">Zenit</a></p>

<p><b>Kevin Farrell</b>, Bishop of Dallas  <b>Kevin W. Vann</b>, Bishop of Fort Worth</p>	<p>"Therefore, we cannot make more clear the seriousness of the overriding issue of abortion – while not the "<b>only issue</b>" – it is the <i>defining moral issue</i>, not only today, but of the last 35 years."  <a href="#">Catholic Pro-Life Committee</a></p> <p>"To vote for a candidate who supports the intrinsic evil of abortion or "abortion rights" when there is a morally acceptable alternative would be to cooperate in the evil – and, therefore, [is] morally impermissible."  <a href="#">Texas Catholic</a></p>
<p><b>Robert J. Carlson</b>, Bishop of Saginaw</p>	<p>"Abortion results in the killing of approximately 1 million children in the womb every year. A Catholic can, in good conscience, vote for a pro-choice candidate only if other issues outweigh this one in number and in kind.</p> <p>What do I mean by "in number and in kind"? Let's take an example. The Church is opposed to the use of the death penalty. But the death penalty does not outweigh abortion because: 1) they differ in number: over 1 million abortions per year vs. less than 100 executions per year, and 2) they differ in kind: the directly willed death of the innocent vs. the directly willed death of those found guilty in a court of law.</p> <p>Aren't there other issues to be considered? Absolutely. Immigration, the economy, the use of military force, the care of the poor, the use of renewable energy. These are all important issues in the life of the country. In good conscience, a Catholic voter must weigh them all.</p> <p>But there is also a scale of values. In good conscience, a Catholic needs to recognize that all issues do not have the same weight. The directly willed death of over a million innocent children each year certainly places a special burden on the conscience.</p> <p>Can any other issue, or combination of issues, attain sufficient gravity to outweigh the directly willed destruction of 1 million children every year? That's the question we must ask ourselves and each other as we weigh our election choices."  <a href="#">Diocese of Saginaw</a></p>

<p><b>Earl Boyea</b>, Bishop of Lansing</p>	<p>"A correct conscience recognizes that there are some choices that always involve doing evil and that can never be done even as a means to achieve a good end. These choices include elective abortion, euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, destruction of young human embryos, human cloning and same-sex "marriage." Such acts are judged to be intrinsically evil; that is, evil in and of themselves, regardless of the motives of those who promote these ideas. They constitute an attack against innocent human life, as well as against the very nature of marriage and family."</p> <p>"In light of the above, we would commit moral evil if we were to vote for a candidate who takes a permissive stand on those actions that are intrinsically evil when there is a morally acceptable alternative. What are we to do, though, when there is no such alternative?</p> <p>Because we have a moral obligation to vote, deciding not to vote at all is not ordinarily an acceptable solution to this dilemma. So, when there is no choice of a candidate that avoids supporting intrinsically evil actions, especially elective abortion or embryonic stem-cell research, we should vote in such a way as to allow the least harm to innocent human life and dignity. We would not be acting immorally, therefore, if we were to vote for a candidate whose positions on these issues are not totally acceptable in order to defeat one who poses an even greater threat to human life and dignity."</p> <p><a href="#">Diocese of Lansing</a></p>
<p><b>Joint Statement</b> by the Bishops of Pennsylvania</p>	<p>"We wish to reiterate that the intentional destruction of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia, is not just one issue among many. Time and time again, we bishops have taught that the right to life is the most basic and fundamental human right and must always be defended. Intrinsic evils can never be supported. Catholic teaching does not treat all issues as morally equivalent. The protection of human life from conception until natural death is the preeminent obligation of a truly just society."</p> <p><a href="#">Pennsylvania Catholic Conference</a></p>

<p><b>James Johnston</b>, Bishop of Springfield</p>	<p>"Most Americans learn from an early age that voting is a civic duty. However, many Americans do not realize that voting is fundamentally a moral act. Like other moral actions in our lives, it is a choosing for which we will each be accountable before God."</p> <p>"Along with the virtue of prudence, principles for moral decision-making are needed. In several key sections of "Faithful Citizenship" the bishops describe some of these key principles. Firstly, the bishops point out that intrinsically evil acts (those acts which are always gravely wrong in every circumstance) are deeply flawed. Additionally, intrinsically evil acts are opposed to love of God and neighbor, and the good of persons. They must always be rejected and opposed and must never be supported or condoned. As an example, the bishops state in paragraph 22: "A prime example is the intentional taking of innocent human life, as in abortion and euthanasia.""</p> <p>"Issues such as how to provide affordable health care or better education or how to conduct and conclude a war are issues that are open to principled debate as to how they should be addressed; as they say, "there is more than one way to skin a cat." Life issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and embryonic stem-cell research are not in that category. These are simply always wrong in every conceivable circumstance. Not only that, they strike at the very foundational right upon which all other rights depend, the right to life."  <a href="#">The Diocese of Springfield – Cape Girardeau</a></p>
<p><b>Michael Sheridan</b>, Bishop of Colorado Springs</p>	<p>"As we examine the many issues espoused by the candidates seeking election, some are in and of themselves (i.e., intrinsically) evil, e.g., abortion, embryonic stem-cell research and same-sex "marriage." These issues should be decisive for the conscientious voter, trumping all others."  <a href="#">The Colorado Catholic Herald</a></p>
<p><b>Joint Statement</b> by the Bishops of New York</p>	<p>"The right to life is the right through which all others flow. To the extent candidates reject this fundamental right by supporting an objective evil, such as legal abortion, euthanasia or embryonic stem cell research, Catholics should consider them less acceptable for public office."  <a href="#">New York State Catholic Conference</a></p>

**Archbishop Raymond L. Burke,**  
Prefect of the Apostolic Signatura  
(as Archbishop of St. Louis)

"Some Catholics have suggested that a candidate's position on the death penalty and war are as important as his or her position on procured abortion and same-sex "marriage." This, however, is not true. Procured abortion and homosexual acts are intrinsically evil, and, as such, can never be justified in any circumstance. Although war and capital punishment can rarely be justified, they are not intrinsically evil; neither practice includes the direct intention of killing innocent human beings. In some circumstances, self-defense and defense of the nation are not only rights, but responsibilities. Neither individuals nor governments can be denied the right of lawful defense in appropriate circumstances (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nos. 2265 and 2309). While we must all work to eradicate the circumstances which could justify either practice, we must stop the killing of innocent unborn children and the practice of euthanasia, and safeguard marriage and the family now. One cannot justify a vote for a candidate who promotes intrinsically evil acts which erode the very foundation of the common good, such as abortion and same-sex "marriage," by appealing to that same candidate's opposition to war or capital punishment."

"The Church, however, also recognizes that it is sometimes impossible to avoid all cooperation with evil, as may well be true in selecting a candidate for public office. In certain circumstances, it is morally permissible for a Catholic to vote for a candidate who supports some immoral practices while opposing other immoral practices. Catholic moral teaching refers to actions of this sort as material cooperation, which is morally permissible when certain conditions are met. With respect to the question of voting, these conditions include the following: 1) there is no viable candidate who supports the moral law in its full integrity; 2) the voter opposes the immoral practices espoused by the candidate, and votes for the candidate only because of his or her promotion of morally good practices; and 3) the voter avoids giving scandal by telling anyone, who may know for whom he or she has voted, that he or she did so to advance the morally good practices the candidate supports, while remaining opposed to the immoral practices the candidate endorses and promotes.

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But, there is no element of the common good, no morally good practice, that a candidate may promote and to which a voter may be dedicated, which could justify voting for a candidate who also endorses and supports the deliberate killing of the innocent, abortion, embryonic stem-cell research, euthanasia, human cloning or the recognition of a same-sex relationship as legal marriage. These elements are so fundamental to the common good that they cannot be subordinated to any other cause, no matter how good."

"A Catholic may vote for a candidate who, while he supports an evil action, also supports the limitation of the evil involved, if there is no better candidate. For example, a candidate may support procured abortion in a limited number of cases but be opposed to it otherwise. In such a case, the Catholic who recognizes the immorality of all procured abortions may rightly vote for this candidate over another, more unsuitable candidate in an effort to limit the circumstances in which procured abortions would be considered legal. Here the intention of the Catholic voter, unable to find a viable candidate who would stop the evil of procured abortion by making it illegal, is to reduce the number of abortions by limiting the circumstances in which it is legal. This is not a question of choosing the lesser evil, but of limiting all the evil one is able to limit at the time."

[St. Louis Review Online](#)

**Pope Benedict XVI**  
(as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,  
Prefect of the Congregation  
for the Doctrine of the Faith)

"Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia. For example, if a Catholic were to be at odds with the Holy Father on the application of capital punishment or on the decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to present himself to receive Holy Communion. While the Church exhorts civil authorities to seek peace, not war, and to exercise discretion and mercy in imposing punishment on criminals, it may still be permissible to take up arms to repel an aggressor or to have recourse to capital punishment. There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not however with regard to abortion and euthanasia."

[Priests for Life](#)