

On Voting for the Upcoming Elections

The following is my advice on voting. I was somewhat reluctant to write anything, since there is such a massive amount of things that have already been written. I've already written that voting is a moral obligation, though not absolute. The rest of these things are basically taken from an article in the Pastoral and Homiletic Review, by Fr. Frank Pavone, in the August/September issue.

1. Our loyalty must first be to our Blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. This loyalty must be above any political party, or even to our country.

2. Know the candidates. This is not an easy knowledge to acquire. But a sufficient knowledge is available. Something to avoid at all costs is throwing up the hands and saying "It's too much, I can't figure it out." There are journals, newspapers, websites, television reports, radio commentaries, and good conversation with friends. The knowledge of candidates is first of all about their principles: First, whether these are in accord with the will of God. Secondly we must look at their character. Lastly we look at their experience. I say lastly, since no one is going to have the requisite experience for being the Commander in Chief of the most powerful military the world has ever known.

3. Distinguish policy from principle. Most disagreements between candidates do not have to do with principle, but with policy. For example, all the candidates will be against crime, and will say that there is no right to crime. But they will disagree on policy, as to how to reduce crime. But there is a dispute over whether there is a right to life at all, and this deals with principle, and is therefore more fundamental.

4. Reject the disqualified. The Catholic position is clear; you can't bump off innocent people. The life in the womb of a woman is human life. It cannot be directly destroyed. This is Divine Law. Abortion is a direct violation of the 5th Commandment. But one does not have to be a Catholic to know that the destruction of life in the womb is wrong. So if any candidate thinks that abortion is something to be fostered and protected, then they should be considered as disqualified for office.

5. Distinguish the issues. There are many issues at stake which concern human life. Take the war in Iraq. Two consecutive popes have condemned it, but the condemnation is not absolute. While the Holy See may be against that war, the continued occupation of Iraq, and the effort to provide security for innocent people in Iraq is not condemned. So there is a great difference morally between the invasion, and the occupation. Even then, war is not intrinsically evil (evil always and everywhere). But abortion and euthanasia are. Therefore a Catholic ought to give more weight to those issues which involve intrinsic evil, than those issues which do not.

Futhermore, we ought to distinguish "choosing evil" from "limiting evil." If two opposing candidates both support abortion, then ask: "Which of the two candidates will do less harm to unborn children?" This is not "choosing the lesser of two evils," which a Catholic is not permitted to do. This is choosing to limit an evil, which is a good thing.

6. Consider the parties. Elections do not only put individual candidates into power, they put political parties into power. We should consider what the parties stand for, and this

can be known by their "platforms." If you do not know what the platforms are regarding the sanctity of human life, then you should inform yourself about them. There is a website called PoliticalResponsibility.org which gives the platforms accurately. If you do not have the internet, then a copy of some of their research is available on the bulletin board next to the restrooms.

7. Pray. Each of the Holy Hours we have here at OLMC will be offered up for the elections, especially that innocent human life would be protected. Here is a fine little prayer by the late Fr. John Hardon, S.J. for elections:

Lord Jesus Christ, You told us to give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God. Enlighten the minds of our people in America. May we choose a President of the United States and other government officials according to Your Divine Will. Give our citizens the courage to choose leaders of our nation who respect the sanctity of unborn human life, the sanctity of marriage, the sanctity of marital relations, the sanctity of the family and the sanctity of the aging. Grant us the wisdom to give You what belongs to You, our God. If we do this as a nation, we are confident You will give us an abundance of Your blessings through our elected leaders. Amen.