

Catholic Voter's Guide

Doing Good and Avoiding Evil in Voting

The first principle of morality is *to do good and avoid evil*. We cannot really do this unless we know what good things *ought* to be sought, and what evils are to be avoided entirely, or tolerated for a time under certain circumstances. In all of this Catholic teaching gives us concrete guidance.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 1706.

By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him "to do what is good and avoid what is evil." Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person.

Catholics Must Form Their Consciences by Church Teaching

This obligation flows from the virtue of faith, since belief in Christ is also belief in the Church and Christ's promises to the Church. This teaching can be found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, which includes the formal teaching of Popes and Councils regarding what has been revealed.

Citizens Have Co-Responsibility for Society

This especially obliges those in a democracy who must elect representatives to run the State on their behalf. The duty to vote obliges depending on the issue and the worthiness of the candidates. It is more seriously obliged when a good candidate is opposed by an unworthy one,

One may not vote for an enemy of religion or freedom, therefore, except to exclude a worse enemy of religion and freedom. In such a case, the exclusion of the worst candidate is the object which is intended, not the evils the less bad candidate might do.

In determining which candidate is a threat to religion and liberty, or, which of several candidates the worse threat is, non-negotiable issues outweigh negotiable issues, since, **1)** Non-negotiables concern certain truths and are always morally applicable, while **2)** Negotiable policy issues involve differing opinions about the best means to the end in complex circumstances.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2237

Political authorities are obliged to respect the fundamental rights of the human person. They will dispense justice humanely by respecting the rights of everyone, especially of families and the disadvantaged.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2239

It is the *duty of citizens* to contribute along with the civil authorities to the good of society in a spirit of truth, justice, solidarity, and freedom. The love and service of *one's country* follow from the duty of gratitude and belong to the order of charity. Submission to legitimate authorities and service of the common good require citizens to fulfill their roles in the life of the political community.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2240

Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes, to exercise the right to vote, and to defend one's country.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2210

The importance of the family for the life and well-being of society¹³ entails a particular responsibility for society to support and strengthen marriage and the family. Civil authority should consider it a grave duty "to acknowledge the true nature of marriage and the family, to protect and foster them, to safeguard public morality, and promote domestic prosperity."¹⁴

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2211

The political community has a duty to honor the family, to assist it, and to ensure especially:

- the freedom to establish a family, have children, and bring them up in keeping with the family's own moral and religious convictions;
- the protection of the stability of the marriage bond and the institution of the family;
- the freedom to profess one's faith, to hand it on, and raise one's children in it, with the necessary means and institutions;
- the right to private property, to free enterprise, to obtain work and housing, and the right to emigrate;
- in keeping with the country's institutions, the right to medical care, assistance for the aged, and family benefits;
- the protection of security and health, especially with respect to dangers like drugs, pornography, alcoholism, etc.;
- the freedom to form associations with other families and so to have representation before civil authority.¹⁵

Five Non-negotiable Issues

Intrinsically evil actions are those that fundamentally conflict with the moral law and can never be performed under any circumstances. It is a serious sin to deliberately endorse or promote any of these actions, and no person who really wants to advance the common good will support any action contrary to the non-negotiable principles involved in these issues.

1. Abortion

The Church teaches that, regarding a law permitting abortions, it is "never licit to obey it, or to take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or to vote for it" (*EV 73*). Abortion is the intentional and direct killing of an innocent human being, and therefore it is a form of homicide. The unborn child is always an innocent party, and no law may permit the taking of his life. Even when a child is conceived through rape or incest, the fault is not the child's, who should not suffer death for others' sins.

Another sub-set issue within this subject area that is non-negotiable pertains to Human Reproductive Technologies, which includes the Church's position against Contraception, In-Vitro Fertilization and Sterilization.

2. Euthanasia

Often disguised by the name "mercy killing," euthanasia is also a form of homicide. No person has a right to take his own life, and no one has the right to take the life of any innocent person. In euthanasia, the ill or elderly are killed, by action or omission, out of a misplaced sense of compassion, but true compassion cannot include intentionally doing something intrinsically evil to another person (*cf. EV 73*).

3. Embryonic Stem Cell Research

Human embryos are human beings. "Respect for the dignity of the human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo" (*CRF 4b*). Recent scientific advances show that medical treatments that researchers hope to develop from experimentation on embryonic stem cells can often be developed by using adult stem cells instead. Adult stem cells can be obtained without doing harm to the adults from whom they come. Thus there is no valid medical argument in favor of using embryonic stem cells. And even if there were benefits to be had from such experiments, they would not justify destroying innocent embryonic humans.

4. Human Cloning

"Attempts ... for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission,' cloning, or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union" (*RHL 1:6*). Human cloning also involves abortion because the "rejected" or "unsuccessful" embryonic clones are destroyed, yet each clone is a human being.

5. Homosexual "Marriage"

True marriage is the union of one man and one woman. Legal recognition of any other union as "marriage" undermines true marriage, and legal recognition of homosexual unions actually does homosexual persons a disfavor by encouraging them to persist in what is an objectively immoral arrangement. "When legislation in favor of the recognition of homosexual unions is proposed for the first time in a legislative assembly, the Catholic lawmaker has a moral duty to express his opposition clearly and publicly and to vote against it. To vote in favor of a law so harmful to the common good is gravely immoral" (*UHP 10*).

Resources:

<https://www.ewtn.com/vote>

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship.pdf>

<http://stbern-bv.org/Voters-Guide-Catholic-English-1p.pdf>