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## **Pastoral Life Office** **Pastoral Guidance for Discernment During Election Times**

- **We all have a common enemy.**
  - The enemy is not a Republican. The enemy is not a Democrat. The enemy is not white, black or brown. The enemy is not rich or poor, a natural born citizen or an immigrant. But, the enemy is real. He is Satan, the Father of Lies, the Accuser, the one who sows division.
  - As Christians, we are called to *prayerfully* discern what is good and evil in light of *faith*.
- **Don't confuse candidates for Saviors.**
  - No one candidate or political party will solve all the perceived evils of this world. We have built way too many pedestals on which we've propped false gods. We invest far too much time and energy in heralding the wrong people with the wrong message. Even the "good ones" are not good enough. No one is perfect except God, and no one will be the perfect leader or answer. If we follow the one true Savior, and put our faith in Him, we will find faith and hope and love.
- **The mission is not to win an election but to participate in the victory of eternal salvation already won for us by Jesus Himself.**
  - Our eyes must remain on the prize... Our mission, in union with our Bishops (the Successors of the Apostles), is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with everyone within our borders.
  - God created us in His image and likeness out of love for relationship with Him with a plan for our truest happiness with Him in heaven.
  - In choosing sin, we have brought death, dysfunction and separation from God into this world.
  - We cannot repair what is fallen on our own.
  - God became one of us, Jesus of Nazareth, to repair what is fallen – to bring all things unto himself – through his incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension.
  - Our response to this gift of grace is to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to be baptized and receive His grace, to discern what is good and evil, to repent of our wrongs, and to live out our lives in accordance with God's will for us.
- **We have been given the tools of Faith and Reason to make sound decisions.**
  - "We Catholics have a lifelong obligation to form our consciences in accord with human reason, enlightened by the teaching of the Christ as it comes to us through the Church." \*
  - We cannot even begin to "know" how to vote, if we don't first know Jesus and His teachings. Our conscience must be properly formed in these teachings by living within the four major principles of social teaching: *The Dignity of the Human Person, Subsidiarity (the Local Church and the Family), The Common Good, and Solidarity.*
  - "It is the moral responsibility of each Catholic to hear, receive, and act upon the Church's teaching in the lifelong task of forming his or her own conscience." \*

- **Look beyond the voting decisions in November.**
    - As Catholics, we are called to bring the Gospel to all aspects of our lives, not just in the voting booth.
    - The election will be over on the morning of November 4th, but the world will go on. The goal line is not November 3; the goal line is the Lord's Day, the Day of Judgment, when each of us meets our Maker. We must make this world a better place for all until that day arrives.
    - We must continue to bring our love of Christ and our brother to our workplace, to our civic action, and to our families.
    - The Church is concerned with eternal and universal truths that have been at work long before this election and will continue long after this election ends.
  
  - **Remember your children are watching.**
    - Our kids will not so much do as we say, but they will do as we do. Everything that we do, our actions – good and bad – are being watched closely by the vulnerable, impressionable eyes of our children. They will become just like us. We are “making” the future of our world with each action we take.
    - Do we want our children to learn to treat people with dignity, compassion, understanding, and love...or with disrespect, aggression, outrage and hate?
  
  - **We are stewards of divine revelation.**
    - At baptism we become stewards of divine revelation, to proclaim the Kerygma, the story of our salvation. “...[A]ll the earthly activities of the faithful will be bathed in the light of the Gospel.” \*
    - This is not “our” message. It is His message. We must care for it, guard it, protect it and share it with everyone we meet. We are not the truth, but we can live in the truth.
- \* From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States (USCCB)*.