

Catholic Church Election Year Policies

Elections are important. The result will make a big difference in the direction of our country and the economic welfare of every family. Politics also affects our faith as well. No wonder people get very agitated about political discourse. This article will discuss the way political discourse happens at Catholic parishes.

Jesus separates Church and State

In a letter to a Connecticut Baptist Church in 1801, President Thomas Jefferson reviewed the First Amendment clauses that affirm, “*Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...*” Years of case law later created a “wall of separation between Church and State.”

Jesus agrees with Jefferson, which is why the Church *never endorses or condemns candidates, but only affirms its own faith*. We trust people will make their own wise decisions while voting. It is one of the most profound freedoms we enjoy.

Catholics use the intelligence we have received from God, and that we have developed ourselves, to exercise carefully and thoughtfully that freedom to vote. We use our mind to the very best of our ability to carefully and thoughtfully **study**, the important issues of the day. We cannot allow ourselves to be swayed by slogans and so we need the truth to make good decisions by seeking good and reliable sources of information. After we have studied the facts, we must use our very best wisdom to **decide** what the right path is. Finally, after deciding, we **act**. For us Catholics in this election year; *acting means voting*.

We need to get our act together!

(Matthew 21: 28) There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, “Son, go and work today in the vineyard.” “I will not,” he answered, but later changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, “I will, sir” but did not go. Which of the two did what his father wanted? “The first,” they answered.

Both sons in the story do not have their words and actions together. Both make promises and then change their mind, but that only affirms people can—and often do—*change their mind!* We can never know what is in a person’s heart today, or what he or she will do tomorrow despite their promises today.

Again, that is why the Church never endorses candidates. Politicians sometimes promote certain goals one day ...and change them the next! However, what never changes is Our Lord and the faith that His words and actions together reveal.

It is our faith that we proclaim and endorse, and never candidates.

It is up to each voter to intelligently determine how close or far a candidate is from Our Lord. The Church respects your choice of candidate as one that is close to Our Lord, especially when your vote is given with thoughtful and prayerful discernment.

While the Church can authoritatively say a certain behavior is always sinful, like greed, corruption, or abortion, it rarely says publicly that some specific person actually is a sinner. We must remember that for any behavior to be sinful, the person must clearly know that behavior is seriously wrong and yet decide to do it anyway. Well, after all, we can never know what is in the mind of that person. Our faith invites humility in presuming we know what is in another's heart.

Ironically, the only people our faith ever formally endorses are actually...all dead! They are the saints that we so much admire like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Teresa of Avila. That "endorsement" process can take years of careful investigation and even medically verified miracles. It begins only after their death so that their words and deeds are complete and can never change. Even places like Lourdes and Fatima are only approved after all apparitions have finished, and even then they remain optional beliefs. Humility demands we don't jump to conclusions about what is in a person's heart!

Obviously, we strongly endorse our faith when it is directly addressed by Propositions. Endorsement or opposition of Propositions is simply affirming our unchanging faith that we have received from Our Lord.

We want to keep clear the distinction between candidates and propositions at St. Paschal's very clear so our common sense approach will simply be that...

Priests, Lectors, Ushers, Communion Ministers, and Singers, *as parish ministers of our Catholic faith*, should not wear candidate buttons while serving at the altar. You may wear Proposition buttons that affirm our faith.

Parishioners: as citizens of course, may wear both candidate and Proposition buttons as their informed conscience dictates.

At every Sunday Mass, we stand and declare our faith in the Nicene Creed; formed by Catholic Bishops in the city of Nicaea near Istanbul not long after the Gospels were written. That still has our strongest endorsement! Let us pray we keep our words and deeds together.

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