

SIN TO VOTE FOR PRO-ABORTION POLITICIANS?

Fr. Matthew Habiger, HLI

Can a Catholic in good conscience vote for a politician who has a clear record of supporting abortion? Or is it a sin to vote for a politician who regularly uses his public office to fund or otherwise encourage the killing of unborn children?

I take the position that it is clearly a sin to vote for such a politician. Let us examine the issue. I shall appeal to arguments based on authority and to arguments based upon the consequences of such a vote.

Every Catholic should know that abortion is a gravely serious evil, and as such is never to be supported. In the Vatican's "*Declaration on Procured Abortion*" (Cardinal Seper, Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1974) there is a discussion of "Morality and Law" (#19-23). "Man may never obey a law which is in itself, immoral and such is the case of a law which would admit in principle, the liceity of abortion. *Nor can he take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law or vote for it.* Moreover, he may not collaborate in its application. It is, for instance, inadmissible that doctors or nurses should find themselves obligated to cooperate closely in abortions and have to choose between the law of God and their professional situation." (22)

Pope John Paul II in "*Evangelium Vitae*" states "I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. ... No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the law of God which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself and proclaimed by the Church" (EV 62C).

"The 1917 Code of Canon Law punished abortion with excommunication. The revised canonical legislation continues this tradition when it decrees that a person who actually procures an abortion incurs automatic (*Latae sententiae*) excommunication" (Canon 1398) "The excommunication affects all those who commit this crime with knowledge of the penalty attached and thus includes those accomplices without whose help the crime would not have been committed" (Canon 1329).

"By this sanction the Church makes clear that abortion is a most serious and dangerous crime, thereby encouraging those who commit it to seek *without delay* the path of conversion. In the Church the purpose of the penalty of excommunication is to make an individual fully aware of the gravity of a certain sin and then to foster genuine conversion and repentance"(EV 62B).

The argument can be made that voting is a very remote form of cooperation in abortion. But is it all that remote? The legislator who votes for abortion is clearly a formal accomplice, giving formal cooperation with abortion. S/he shares both in the intention of the act, and in supplying material support for the act. If I vote for such a candidate, knowing full well that he will help make available public monies for abortion, or continue its decriminalization, then I am aiding him/her.

It is a hard fact that when funding dries up for budgets of abortuaries, the abortion provider lays off staff, making fewer abortions possible. Unlike the pro-life movement, the abortion industry is not staffed with volunteers, who stand to gain no commercial advantage. If budgets are cut, the staff is reduced. If the abortuary is unprofitable, it closes its doors.

It is not sufficient to think that, since candidate X takes the 'right position' on other issues such as the economy, foreign relations, defense, etc. but only goes wrong on abortion, one can in good conscience, vote for him/her. *Abortion deals with the first and most basic human right, without which there is nothing left to talk about.*

Is this too stringent a way of thinking? Is it not nuanced enough, or does it do injustice to the complexities of a pluralistic society? Consider this question in light of another issue. Would voters be understanding and nuanced in their toleration of a known racist? Or would that be sufficient reason for everyone to consider him/her unfit for public office? Why should we understand intolerance in the case of racism, but not in the case of murdering unborn babies? Abortion is not just another "issue" - it is a matter of life and death, the great civil rights issue of our time.

In his homily delivered at the National Shrine on 21 January, Bernard Cardinal Law said: "We who are here are challenged by the words of the Holy Father who calls us to be aware that we are facing an enormous and dramatic clash between good and evil, death and life, the culture of death and the culture of life. We find ourselves not only face with, but necessarily in the midst of this conflict; we are all involved and we all share in it, with the inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life."

"That is what Catholics are called to: to be *unconditionally pro-life*. There is *no ambiguity* in the words of Peter's successor. To be Catholic is to be unconditionally pro-life. To support abortion, to advocate the right to choose an abortion can *in no way be considered a catholic option*. ..."

"All too many of us, however, have hidden the Gospel of Life under the bushel basket of political expediency. How scandalous it is to see the evidence of Catholic votes supporting those who deny the Gospel of Life! It is easy to criticize Catholic elected representatives who have rejected life. Do we not need to be even more concerned with the far greater number of Catholic voters who fail to challenge those politicians?"

"Our task within the household of faith is clear and daunting, my brothers and sisters. It must be made abundantly clear in pulpits, in classrooms, in the lecture halls of our colleges and universities, in the Catholic press, *in the way we vote*, that *to be catholic is to be unconditionally pro-life*."

It is a scandal that Catholic politicians vote for bills which fund or otherwise advance abortion. They should be named, publicly shamed and admonished so that they can cease their evil and return to God.

To vote for such a candidate is to willfully participate in that candidate's choices and deeds. It is a sin, and must be repented.

Fr Matthew Habiger,
Human Life International
4 Family Life
Front Royal VA 22630
(540) 635-7884
www.hli.org

Original posted on EWTN: <https://www.ewtn.com/library/ISSUES/SINTOVOT.HTM>

Reprinted with permission from Human Life International - wwwhli.org