

# Before you vote, answer these questions

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***When we vote, we are not voting for the candidate but for the party platform and all within it***

By Bishop Richard F. Stika

*“Thus says the Lord.... Is it my way that is unfair, or rather, are not your ways unfair?”* — Ezekiel 18:25

**Questions God Asks.** God always asks hard questions of us, but only that we might further scrutinize our thoughts and better discern the decisions we must make to bring us closer to God and the way He thinks and loves. With this in mind, I will pose a number of questions that might prove very challenging to answer, but answer you must—not to me, but to God because they are moral questions, and they deal with how you will vote in the upcoming election.

**End and Means.** There are two foundational principles of morality that we must always be guided by in discerning our choices in life—“do good and avoid evil,” and “the end does not justify the means.” Together, these basic truths remind us that no matter how good the end is that we desire, good intentions can never excuse the use of evil means in attaining them. Such is the lens we must use to approach the moral act of voting.

**Two Paths.** Perhaps you share my serious concern that the election that is upon us will decide whether the path our nation takes will be to the quickening of its ruin or not. At this crucial time in our nation’s history, I am reminded of the opening words in the ancient Christian manuscript of the first or second century, “The Didache”: “There are two ways, one of life and one of death; but a great difference between the two ways.” Of the two political parties, which do you feel best promotes the way of life or the way of death?

**Candidates and Platforms.** While many are focusing solely upon the candidates and their personalities and mannerisms, and the media’s select reporting of them, it is critically important to go

beyond the candidates and to actually examine each party's political platform. For what we actually are voting for is the political platform of the candidate's party and the means that party will employ to obtain its vision for the country and for each of you.

**Read the Platform.** The political platforms of both parties can be easily read online (note: Google “2016 Republican Party Platform,” as because of COVID-19 they kept their 2016 platform unchanged). Though it takes a good bit of effort to go beyond all the political rhetoric and the “pie in the sky” promises and hyperbole, you will get a much better idea of each party’s agenda.

**Life Issues.** An examination of the party platforms reveals starkly different positions on issues involving intrinsic evils that are never permissible or acceptable. On issues regarding the sanctity of life, the platforms are polar opposites of each other on abortion, infanticide, embryonic stem cell research, euthanasia and assisted suicide, and the death penalty, as well as on the criteria they will use for the selection of judges and Supreme Court justices to defend their particular stand on these life issues.

**Other Issues.** The platforms also highlight each party’s position on religious freedom and conscience rights (although we must also look at the past 12 years to see the reality of their definition of these), as well as separation of church and state. The parties differ significantly on issues related to marriage and the family, gender identity, on the educational system, on sex and LGBTQ instruction in our public schools, and on school choice. They differ significantly on the size of government and socialism, taxation, more or less business and trade regulations, and on immigration reform and the rights of a nation to control its borders. They have different plans for health insurance and

medical care. And they differ on the best way to protect the environment.

**Supporting Agendas.** When you vote for a political candidate, you are in fact empowering their particular party to advance the agenda outlined in their platform. Whether I choose a candidate because of his personality or because I like his party's stand on particular issues, we must understand that our vote supports their party's entire agenda—you buy into the party's entire program for our country.

**Issues We Can't Ignore.** There are many issues that are a matter of prudential judgment, meaning there can be legitimate debate about which party offers the better solution on various issues. But some issues are of such moral weight that they rise above all other issues and can become the preeminent issue that decides how we cast our vote.

**Questions to Ponder.** Here, I wish to ask a series of questions, prefaced with some brief background, that we must seriously ponder and answer regarding our vote in this election.

**Pre-eminent Issue.** Not everyone believes abortion to be the pre-eminent moral issue of our time, nor of this election. But it's hard to argue with the statistical facts that each week in our country approximately 19,000 unborn children are "surgically" aborted in the most horrific and painful way. This number would be significantly higher if the number of "chemical" RU-486 abortions was counted, which they are not. But because many are indifferent about abortion, including clergy, ask yourself the following questions.

**Questions.** Medical science is irrefutable in affirming that human life begins at conception. So instead of unborn children, if

19,000 Jews or Muslims, Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians were brutally executed each week in our country and their remains thrown in garbage dumpsters, would you vote for the political party that promotes and protects the right to do so? Can you vote for a party whose platform clearly supports, promotes, and will do everything possible to protect the willful destruction of human life on a genocidal scale? Do you believe that a more just society can be built upon a foundation that considers the unborn child to be less of a person and therefore undeserving of the most basic right that our Constitution guarantees: the right to life?

**A Historical Perspective.** Let us look back at a time when our nation and its highest court in the land ruled that another class of people, African slaves, were “less than human” and therefore considered “property” to be used as one wished. If you were alive in the mid-1800s up until slavery’s end, would slavery have been a preeminent moral issue for you, or would it have been one issue among many others that you felt equally or more important? Would you have voted for candidates of the pro-slavery political party or would you have voted for those of the anti-slavery political party?

**Tax Support.** If you lived in the 1800s, would you have voted for a political party that insisted that your tax dollars should support the slave trade and its organizations the same way your tax dollars are being used today to support Planned Parenthood and the culture of death within our nation as well as globally? Would you vote for the political party if it forced you, against your conscience, to support the slave trade as a part of your health insurance premiums (had such existed back then) the way the Affordable Care Act mandated that abortion, abortifacients, and contraceptives be provided, even by the Church, in insurance packages to employees?

**Another Perspective.** During World War II, 6 million Jews were systematically exterminated over a six-year period between 1939 and 1945. Over each six-year period since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision to legalize abortion, approximately the same number of unborn children is exterminated in our country as the total number of Jewish people during the Holocaust. Can you vote for a political party that sees nothing morally wrong with the abortion of the unborn on a scale that repeats that of the Holocaust every six years in our country? Can you vote for a political party that has vowed to appoint judges and Supreme Court justices that support and protect the right to abortion, knowing this may result in this law becoming so enshrined and legally protected as never to be overturned?

**Red Dragon.** In the Book of Revelation (12:3), we find a horrible image of abortion and infanticide in its description of the “huge red dragon” ready to devour the child a woman is in labor with. The image recalls the idolatrous practice of child sacrifice to the demon deity Molech that the Israelites, in failing to follow God, practiced to their ruin. Are not abortion and infanticide the continued sacrifice of innocent life to this demon deity? Can you in good conscience vote for a political party that promotes what God declared to be an abomination?

**Care of the Environment.** Do you believe that on the level of sheer magnitude, abortion is the pre-eminent moral issue of our time? Can you vote for a political party that wants to take extreme measures to protect our environment when it takes the most extreme measures to destroy life in the first environment, the womb?

**Alternative Facts and Civil Discourse.** Unfortunately, we live in a time of “alternative facts”—my truth your truth, my reality your reality—that shuts down any attempt at discourse on

serious issues. This is why we are beginning to see everything falling apart around us. If our nation cannot debate issues civilly and intelligently, then violence becomes the answer to solving problems, particularly that of racism. And in reality, violence never solves problems, but creates new ones.

**Fears and Consequences.** Are there other issues that also should be considered as a part of good governance and our vote? Absolutely. But like the terrible issue of slavery in the 1800s, abortion is the pre-eminent issue that stands apart and above all the other issues. If the political party that supports this gains control, I fear this evil practice will be enshrined in such a way as to never be overturned. I fear people will be forced to support this genocidal evil, and that health-care professionals, and even Catholic hospitals, will be forced to perform abortions and sterilizations against their beliefs. I fear that our priests and Catholics of good conscience will be arrested and charged with “hate crimes” for simply praying outside of abortion facilities or speaking in defense of the sanctity of marriage and the moral teachings of the Church. I fear the consequences that our nation faces, as it did because of slavery, for the shedding of so much innocent blood from abortion, a sin that cries out from the blood-soaked ground to heaven like Abel’s blood after his murder by Cain (Genesis 4:10).

**Frustration.** Do I disagree with the political party that supports the death penalty? Yes I do. Do I disagree with the political party that does not more compassionately balance the dignity and right of a person to migrate against a nation’s right to control its borders? Yes I do. But sadly, I am unable to reflect this disagreement in my vote because of the far greater assaults upon the sanctity and dignity of human life that one political party so unashamedly violates and protects.

**Hierarchy of Values.** The reason I take issue with any political party is over anything that violates the sanctity and dignity of the human person created in God's image. In this regard, I find the hierarchy of values promoted by the Second Vatican Council a great help in prioritizing the weight of various issues. Of greatest weight and value for us to consider in voting "whatever is opposed to life itself," followed by "whatever violates the integrity of the human person," and then "whatever insults human dignity" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27). But in this hierarchy, it is that which is "opposed to life itself" that defines the pre-eminent issue of our time and of this election.

**What I Cannot Vote For.** For this reason, I cannot vote for a political party and its agenda that supports the unrestricted genocide of abortion (19,000-plus human lives a week exterminated). I cannot vote for a political party that continues to erode protections of conscience rights. I cannot support the party that attacks and condemns the Catholic Church and people of faith for speaking out on matters of faith and morals. I cannot support a party that attacks the sanctity of marriage and the family, for what harms the family, harms society. I cannot vote for a party that redefines human sexuality and gender identity and wants to force its ideology driven "sex education" in our public schools in violation of parental rights. I cannot support the growing acceptance of the grave social error of socialism that the Church has condemned for over 125 years. And I cannot support any political party that pushes God out of society and its governing, for it is the Lord God who is the true King and Ruler that governments and leaders should pattern their manner of governing after. Words to Heed. So I close with the words of Moses to the Israelites as they neared the end of their Exodus that you, too, must heed:

*“Here, then, I have today set before you life and prosperity, death and doom.... I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land which the LORD swore he would give* (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19-20).