

Fr. Perozich comments —

This article was written in October 2020. It is helpful to me in understanding truth, respect for legitimate exercise of authority, the process of healthy debate, and the challenging of authority to be faithful to the God who is the source of all authority for His people.

With no hate or animosity, Jesus challenged the thinking of the religious leaders of His time when they criticized Jesus' healing ministry and the picking of grain to eat immediately on the Sabbath when there was no food.

The Lord freed those of their physical and spiritual infirmities with no personal benefit to Himself, thus He did not violate the law given through Moses, the very law which He Himself spoke to the prophet.

In referring to the scribal and pharisaical interpretations of the law, the classic question, "Cui bono", "Who benefits" would come into play, as well as "How does this serve God?"

Jesus freed "this daughter of Israel" from her infirmity of many years. Jesus gave sight to the man born blind. Jesus freed the paralytics. Jesus cured the lepers, all to give them freedom in their lives to serve the Lord, to live without dependency on the alms of others. What sort of benefit was it for the Jewish leaders at that time to impose their interpretation of the law of not working on the Sabbath when normal activities such as watering and feeding of animals was permitted?

Jesus did NOT follow their interpretations even though their authority was from God.

It plays out in our time of how those with legitimate authority are exercising it, to what purpose, at what point does a faithful citizen or Christian see the divide between legitimate and illegitimate exercise of authority and follow the first while rejecting the second.

In the church and in the government leaders are commanding citizens of the kingdom and of the nations according to leaders' personal beliefs. At what point does a person say, yes to this and no to that?

Debate is a wonderful exercise to train the mind to think, to expose truth and falsehood. Shutting down the debate in order to promote a personal idea is not a legitimate use of God given authority, when a leader should eschew his personal opinion in favor of the truth of life given by God.

In reading the proceedings of episcopal synods, it appears Pope Francis interjected himself into the process so that his ideas would prevail. When legitimately challenged by those appointed to assist him to answer doubts, the pope remained silent, failing to exercise his legitimate teaching authority. Synod participants complained that

ideas were included in the report that they did not discuss. Bishops in the United States were stopped from voting on their proposal regarding the investigation of Theodore McCarrick. Again they were delayed in delivering their challenges to President Biden.

Now the challenges to the exercise of authority and the claims of bishops are becoming more frequent. This is a good process since it has to do with the moral life of God's faithful.

Bishops can and do silence priests by removing them from their parishes, ordering them to be silent on publications and media, entertaining spurious accusations with removal from ministry even after innocence is proved such as the case of Fr Frank Philips at St. John Cantius in Chicago. USCCB theologian Fr. Thomas Weinandy was forced to resign the day after his open letter to the Holy Father. There are others as well in this unbalanced hierarchy of leadership.

Here, however, we have a bishop challenging another bishop to tell the whole truth, to use his authority as bishop to teach as the church teaches not the opinions of men since 2013 but from the Church's scripture and Tradition of 2,000 years, to use the principles of morality to draw correct conclusions.

As a young man I felt I could always rely on the church for the truth of faith and morality. Since the sexual revolution and the rejection of Humanae Vitae in 1968, a devolution has been occurring in statements by those with authority, and the promotion of men to authority who will promulgate their opinions to attain their ends.

Debate is healthy. Are the facts and argument made to allow a truth to be exposed, or is the argument constructed with omissions and fallacies to attain a certain outcome?

Robert McElroy promotes his teaching and interpretations on abortion, voting. Thomas Daly challenges the veracity, the argument, and the teaching that must be done by a bishop. This helps to inform me as a Catholic.

One bishop gives permission to vote for abortion promoting candidates; the other rejects that. Why does a bishop speak this way?

Cui bono? Who benefits and how? This, with prayer, also helps the faithful Catholic or citizen toward the truth and toward obedience to legitimate authority and to know when he is being misled either purposefully or by poor argumentation.

Bishop Daly Challenges Bishop McElroy's Statements on Abortion and the 2020 Election

During an Oct. 13 virtual discussion about voting, the bishop of San Diego implied that Joe Biden's overt support for abortion rights is a 'prudential' position that is acceptable for a Catholic politician to advance.



Bishop Thomas Daly speaking with students gathered for the 2019 Respect Life Mass. (photo: Courtesy photo / Diocese of Spokane)
[Joan Frawley Desmond](#)

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SPOKANE, Wash. — Bishop Thomas Daly of Spokane told the Register Wednesday that he strongly disagreed with San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy’s guidance to Catholic voters, offered during a virtual discussion organized by St. Mary’s College just three weeks before the 2020 presidential election.

In his Oct.13 [remarks](#), Bishop McElroy indicated it was acceptable for Catholics to support Democratic nominee Joe Biden’s pro-abortion-rights stance because, according to the bishop, the “formulation of individual laws regarding abortion” lies in the “realm” of prudential judgment.

“Reading through Bishop McElroy’s statement, I noticed that he never mentions that abortion is the ‘preeminent’ moral issue for Catholics,” Bishop Daly told the Register.

“Bishop McElroy is a moral theologian, but one of the most important roles of a bishop is to teach, and he never mentions the Church’s teaching that abortion is the ‘preeminent’ moral issue for Catholics.”

During the discussion, which was titled “Voting as an Authentic Disciple,” at the Indiana college, Bishop McElroy addressed the question of how Catholic voters should consider a candidate’s position on abortion.

According to the *National Catholic Reporter*, Bishop McElroy said that because the Church teaches that some actions, including abortion, are “intrinsically evil,” defined

as “always and everywhere wrong,” Church leaders have argued that “candidates who seek laws opposing intrinsically evil actions automatically have a primary claim to political support in the Catholic conscience.”

The San Diego bishop did not agree with this position and told his audience that “the framing of legislation is inescapably the realm of prudential judgment, not intrinsic evil.”

“While a specific act of abortion is intrinsically evil, the formulation of individual laws regarding abortion is not,” he said. “It is an imperative of conscience for Catholic disciples to seek legal protections for the unborn. But whether these protections take the form of sanctioning the doctor or the pregnant mother, whether those sanctions should be civil or criminal penalties, and the volatile issues pertaining to outlawing abortions arising from rape, incest and danger to the mother are all questions of deep disagreement among advocates wholeheartedly devoted to the protection of unborn children. Like the issues of fighting poverty and addressing climate change, the issue of abortion in law and public policy is a realm where prudential judgment is essential and determinative.”

Bishop Daly criticized his guidance in an Oct. 14 interview with the Register.

The 2020 election pits President Donald Trump, a Republican who has pledged to continue to implement and promote pro-life policies, against Joe Biden, a self-identified Catholic who backs *Roe v. Wade*, opposes the Hyde Amendment and has promised to pass legislation securing legal abortion should *Roe* be overturned.

Bishop Daly recalled that before the November 2019 vote on updating the U.S. bishops’ election-year statement,

“Cardinal [Blase] Cupich and Bishop McElroy wanted changes in the document, with Bishop McElroy arguing that it isn’t Catholic teaching that abortion is the preeminent issue that we face as a world, and Archbishop [Charles] Chaput stood to challenge that statement.”

During that [intense debate](#) over the language on abortion that would be added to a letter accompanying the USCCB’s election-year guidance, “[Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship](#),” Bishop McElroy argued that identifying abortion as a “preeminent priority” was at odds with Church teaching and with Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation [Gaudete et Exsultate \(Rejoice and Be Glad\)](#). The exhortation states that the lives of the unborn are “equally sacred” with “the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.”

“It is not Catholic teaching that abortion is the preeminent issue that we face in the world of Catholic social teaching,” Bishop McElroy said, adding that to teach otherwise would provide “a grave disservice” to the faithful.

Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia stood up to challenge Bishop McElroy’s argument.

“I am certainly not against quoting the Holy Father’s full statement. I think it’s a beautiful statement,” said Archbishop Chaput. “But I am against anyone stating that our stating it [abortion] is ‘preeminent’ is contrary to the teaching of the Pope,” he added, sparking applause. “That isn’t true.”

Bishop McElroy also suggested in his St. Mary's comments that voters should not question the Catholicity of a candidate who does not support pro-life policies.

“One very sad dimension of the election cycle we are witnessing,” he said, is “the public denial of candidates’ identity as Catholics because of a specific policy position they have taken. Such denials are injurious because they reduce Catholic social teaching to a single issue. But they are offensive because they constitute an assault on the meaning of what it is to be Catholic.”

Bishop Daly noted Bishop McElroy said it was “offensive” to question a candidate’s Catholic identity, irrespective of the policies they uphold.

“But in his description of what constitutes a Catholic, there is no mention of loving Christ and loving the truth,” Bishop Daly said. “The truth is that life begins at conception and must be protected and revered until natural death. That belief forms who we are as Catholics, but it is left out of his definition of being a Catholic, as far as I am concerned.”

“I keep thinking of those words from Deuteronomy: ‘I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live.’”

Bishop Daly said that the San Diego bishop’s remarks “effectively constituted a defense of Biden and other prominent Catholic elected officials who publicly support unrestricted abortion.”

“But if abortion is intrinsically evil, which Bishop McElroy admits to, how can Catholics vote for a candidate like Biden?” asked Bishop Daly.

“He has moved in an aggressive way to do all he can to make sure abortion is available. He has walked away from the Hyde Amendment. If elected, he will push for legislation that furthers abortion. He is not passive on this issue. There is no nuance. He has taken a strong stand.”



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