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Can a Catholic Vote in Support of Abortion?
(column from The Catholic Key)

October 17, 2008

Can a Catholic vote, in good conscience, for a candidate who supports abortion? This is the question I am asked over and over again.

The recent Pastoral Letter, [Our Moral Responsibility as Catholic Citizens](#), which I co-wrote with Archbishop Joseph Naumann of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, attempts to give guidance on this issue. I urge you to read it.

There the Archbishop and I acknowledge that we are often faced with “imperfect candidates.” Specifically we offered the example of two candidates who were permissive on abortion. We taught that, in such an instance, we should choose the candidate whose position will likely do the least grave evil, or whose position will do the most to limit the specific grave evil of abortion. But, again and again, I am asked, “Can a Catholic vote for the candidate who is perhaps the most extreme in favor of abortion, even if they promote other policies which we judge to be good?”

I must say that there is another question I would pose. What is the effect on Catholics of a candidate who has been consistently supportive of abortion?

When a candidate supports ready access to abortion on demand, they are inviting Catholics to put aside their conscience on this life and death issue. Such a candidate is inviting conscientious Catholics to look elsewhere for moral leadership.

When a candidate promotes total unhindered “choice,” he or she discourages the Catholic vote, and at the same time tempts the voter to betray one of the most obvious intuitions of our humanity and to support the continuation of the willful destruction of human life.

If the candidate has supported partial birth abortion, he or she asks the voter to affirm the continuation of an act that 75% of the population has rejected as repulsive.

When a candidate regards the unborn child as unworthy of the defense of law, then he or she asks us to join them in ignoring the lessons of history by which African Americans in this country were once regarded as non-persons; or the Jews of Europe were once marked for genocide or racial purification. Had we known, would we have supported the “choice” to enslave or destroy these brothers and sisters of ours? Can a candidate expect us as Catholics to ignore the classification of the unborn as non-persons? Will he or she expect us to look aside while these babies are quietly exterminated at a rate of 4000 per day? This is precisely what they are asking us to do.

Some groups calling themselves “Catholic” have suggested that generous programs for the poor will reduce abortions more than the repeal of Roe v. Wade. But a candidate who pledges that he or she will seek to immediately ratify the Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA), signals to voters that the reduction of abortions is not a goal. They are asking voters to suspend the effort to constitutionally protect human life, and – at the same time - to discard all the good progress we have made to actually reduce the number of abortions in the last thirty-five years. Such a candidate is asking Catholics to “give up” on abortion. They want us to deny our conscience and ignore their callous disregard for the most vulnerable human life.

If the candidate has addressed their legislative assembly, urging opposition to the Born-Alive Infant Protection Act, then it must be concluded that this candidate wishes Catholic voters to be complicit in infanticide. Rejection of this Act, which would require that a baby who survived an unsuccessful abortion attempt be cared for and not laid aside to die with no medical assistance, is a convincing example of the numbing of our moral sensibility. The candidate who supports this fatal neglect of life and asks our vote, asks too much of any fellow human being. Our country is at the edge of the precipice concerning the protection of the life and dignity of the human person. A significant new attack on innocent human life will likely send us into a moral freefall that would rival any financial decline. The price for such a “walk over the cliff” is millions more human lives for many more years to come.

A candidate who asks us to add our weight to such a destructive momentum in our society, asks us to be participants in their own gravely immoral act. This is something which, in good conscience, we can never justify. Despite hardship, beyond partisanship, for the sake of our eternal salvation: This we should never do.