



## St. Andrew Catholic Church

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## Catholics Voting Conscience

### **Q. Why does the Catholic Church provide voting guidance such as this?**

A. The Church encourages Catholics to form our consciences consistently with our Christian faith so that we may make sound moral judgments and consequential political choices about public issues.

### **Q. Does the Church have the right to address political issues?**

A. The Church has the God-given responsibility and the constitutionally protected right under the First Amendment to teach the Natural Law (choose good, not evil), God's Revelation (the 10 Commandments) and Christ's Gospel (the Beatitudes) and to encourage all persons to apply Christ's moral teachings to political issues. When Catholics, and all people of good will, bring our beliefs and principles into the political realm, our moral character, civil discourse and free society are enhanced, not threatened.

### **Q. Does the Church align herself with a particular political party or candidate?**

A. The Church is never partial to a particular party or candidate. The Church does not tell its members for whom they should (or should not) vote. The Church addresses the political issues and challenges the faithful to vote according to their well formed consciences, following the teachings of Christ and His Church.

### **Q. With what political issues is the Church currently concerned?**

A. The essence of Church advocacy can be summarized in Her commitment to the consistent ethic of human life: that we have a moral obligation to defend human life from conception to natural death, and to respect the human dignity of all persons. This concerns a wide-range of social justice issues, such as family life, marriage, immigration, torture, health care, abortion, poverty, war, economic policy, etc.

**Q. Is any one of these issues more important than the others?**

A. The intentional taking of innocent human life (as in murder, abortion, euthanasia and unjust war) is intrinsically evil and is not just one issue among many. It is the first and fundamental issue upon which all other issues depend. It must never be condoned. Other direct threats to the dignity of human life (such as human cloning, research on human embryos, and genocide) are also intrinsically evil.

**Q. Is it true that the Church is only concerned about abortion as a political issue?**

A. The Church sees abortion first as a moral issue, not a political issue. The intentional destruction of innocent human life is always gravely evil, sinful. The erosion of respect for human life at this earliest stage of life diminishes respect for human life in all its stages and categories. It is so evil, as with murder, that it should be prohibited by our laws and not permitted as it is now.

**Q. Is the Catholic Church a one-issue Church?**

A. No. Nor should Catholics be one-issue voters. A candidate's position on one issue should not guarantee our votes. If a candidate, however, takes a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, a Catholic voter should deny that candidate his or her support and vote.

**Q. How should a Catholic vote when no candidate supports all of the Catholic positions on matters?**

A. Catholics cannot vote for a candidate who supports any intrinsic evil (such as abortion) if the Catholic voter's intention is to support that evil position. To do so would make the voter an intentional cooperater in grave evil. If all candidates, however, support an intrinsic evil, then a Catholic who rejects that intrinsic evil may vote for the least disqualified candidate who would most likely pursue other moral goods.

**Q. As a Catholic, if I am to vote with my conscience, how can I best form my conscience for such decisions?**

A. The Church's role is to help the formation of conscience. Catholics have the moral responsibility to receive and act on Church teaching to develop well-formed consciences. The formation of conscience is a lifelong task, particularly as our world changes and new moral questions arise. Forming our consciences well requires that we take time to pray, study, and to learn what the Church teaches about social issues. Many resources are available to help Catholics form their consciences, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church (<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>), her Compendium of Social Doctrine ([www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html)), our U.S. Bishops' website ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)), and our own website (<http://www.standrewcatholicchurch.org/index.php?page=fr-james-l-leblanc-s-page>) and our pamphlet racks, all good means of growing in knowledge about Church teaching.