

Pastor's Column

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“Faithful Citizenship—The General Election of November 7, 2006”

In a few weeks, elections across our country and in our state will take place. Hopefully, all of us are beginning to prepare to vote by gathering information regarding the various candidates and the various propositions that are on the ballot.

Bishop Stephen Blaire, Bishop of Stockton and President of the California Catholic Conference, in a homily on May 7, 2006 reminds us of our duty to be faithful citizens:

“Being a Catholic is not just a matter of belonging to some kind of association or congregation of people who believe in Jesus...Religious conviction of a faith is a 24 hour, seven day a week reality...Being a disciple of Christ is not isolated nor compartmentalized from our other vocations in life. If you are a store clerk, if you are a doctor, if you are a student, if you are a stay-at-home mom, if you are an auto mechanic, if you are an administrative assistant...You are conformed to Christ in whatever you do.”

In exercising “Faithful Citizenship,” we are mindful that in the Catholic Tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation.

As Catholics, we never endorse any specific candidates nor do we endorse any specific political parties. And we are mindful that neither major party, the Republican Party nor the Democratic Party, is fully “Pro-life” in the Catholic Church’s understanding of “Pro-life.”

As we vote then for specific candidates, we need to be examining them through the Catholic lens of “Pro-life,” and then, according to our conscience, vote for the candidates and party that exhibits best the “Pro-life” characteristics of the Catholic Church.

Always be mindful that no one can tell you how to vote! The Magisterium of the Church will inform you of what is the Catholic position, and encourage you to vote accordingly, but when you are in the voter’s booth, you, in the presence of God, with an informed conscience, must vote according to the direction of your conscience.

Conscience is supreme, and it holds a most sacred place within Catholic Tradition.

Although the Church does not endorse candidates, it does, at times, endorse certain propositions that appear on the ballot.

This year, on the California Ballot, there are 13 propositions. The California Catholic Conference of Bishops has prepared a voter’s guide in regard to these 13 propositions. This guide is included in today’s Bulletin. Please take time to review it, and use it as a guide to help you in your preparation to vote.

Special attention is called to three of the propositions:

Proposition 85

“Waiting Period and Parental Notification before Termination of Minor’s Pregnancy, Initiative Constitutional Amendment.”

The California Catholic Conference, California Pro-Life Council, Catholics for the Common Good, California Knights of Columbus, Catholics for 85 and many pro-life groups support Proposition 85 saying that it will allow Californians the right to counsel and care for their daughters before and after an abortion; there are similar laws that protect girls in over 30 states, where implementation resulted in the decline of both minor pregnancy and abortion.

The California bishops strongly support the passage of Proposition 85.

Proposition 86

“Tax on Cigarettes, Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute”

Proposition 86 will impose an additional \$2.60 per pack excise tax on cigarettes and indirectly increases taxes on other tobacco products. It is estimated that this tax will prevent 700,000 California youth from becoming smokers and cause 500,000 Californians to quit. These taxes will also provide funding for various health programs—including children’s health insurance. Funding will also go to nurses’ education, emergency room care, disease prevention, treatment, and research related to cancer (lung, breast, cervical, prostate, and colorectal), heart disease/stroke, and asthma.

Proposition 86 is strongly supported by the Alliance of Catholic Healthcare (which represents 59 hospitals in California), the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, the American Heart Association, and the Congregations for Civic Action (CCA) with which St. Thomas More is affiliated (the ministry of CCA is encouraged by and supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Diocese of San Diego.)

Proposition 1C

“Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006”

Proposition 1C proposes to issue bonds in the amount of \$2.85 billion for the purpose of providing shelters for battered women and their children; housing for low-income seniors, homeownership assistance for the disabled, military veterans and working families; and repair apartments for families and the disabled.

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Proposition 1C is supported by Catholic Charities of California saying, “Our communities are out of balance when large numbers of people are in inadequate housing or without homes. Voters in 2002 supported increased housing programs. Proposition 1C continues that legacy of improved housing programs, sheltering battered women, and makes our communities more affordable for all.”

Also supporting Proposition 1C Habitat for Humanity, AARP, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, and the Congregations for Civic Action (CCA) with which St. Thomas More is affiliated. (CCA’s ministry in our Diocese is encouraged by and supported by the Catholic Campaign for Human Development and the Diocese of San Diego.)

CCA has been very active in the last several years to ensure that affordable housing is available in the city of Oceanside.

Please take time in the coming weeks to become an informed voter. Hopefully, the inclusion of the “California Catholic Conference” Propositions Guide will be helpful to you in becoming informed and voting conscientiously.

“The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society... is proper to the lay faithful. As citizens of the State, they are called to take part in public life in a personal capacity. The mission of the lay faithful is therefore to configure social life correctly, respecting its legitimate autonomy and cooperating with other citizens according to their respective competencies and fulfilling their own responsibility.”

—Deus Caritas Est, #28; Pope Benedict XVI, 2006

F. Mike