

## Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time A October 4, 2020

- ◆ ‘Respect Life’ Sunday
- ◆ October is Domestic Violence Month
- ◆ Upcoming Election Leaves Catholics Divided

When we hear the words “pro-life” in political discourse, it usually refers exclusively to the protection of the life of the unborn child which, of course, is of paramount importance. But for the Church, pro-life encompasses *all* life—from ‘womb to tomb.’

In their letter *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the US Bishops state that “*the call to holiness requires a firm and passionate defense of ‘the innocent unborn.’*” But they go on to add that “*equally sacred are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and the elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new form of slavery, and every form of rejection.*”

Furthermore, *the threat of abortion is our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself . . . and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty and the death penalty.*

*Our efforts to protect the unborn remain as important as ever, for just as the Supreme Court may allow greater latitude for state laws restricting abortion, state legislators have passed statutes not only keeping abortion legal through all nine months of pregnancy but opening the door to infanticide. Additionally, abortion contaminates many other important issues by being inserted into legislation regarding immigration, care for the poor, and health care reform.*

*At our border, many arriving families endure separation, inhumane treatment, and lack of due process, while those fleeing persecution and violence face heightened barriers to seeking refuge and asylum. Within our border, Dreamers, Temporary Protected Status (TPS) holders, and mixed-status and undocumented families face continued fear and anxiety as political solutions fail to materialize. Lawmakers’*

*inability to pass comprehensive immigration reform which acknowledges the family as the basic unit of society has contributed to the deterioration of conditions at the border. As we seek solutions, we must ensure that we receive refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants in light of the teachings of Christ and the Church while assuring the security of our citizens. (pp 6-7)*

So for Catholics and for disciples of Jesus, ‘pro-life’ is *all* human life—born and unborn. While we may not have time in our *schedules* for all of life issues, we should find time in our *hearts* for all these issues. There is always the danger that we profess to stand for life but, in reality, our pro-life principles do not extend to *all of life*. Each of us has to ask ourselves to what extent are we pro-life from womb to tomb.

### A Prayer for Life

#### **A PRAYER FOR LIFE**

**Loving God, Creator of all,  
we recognize that life is a gift from you.  
Open our hearts to your Holy Spirit  
and renew in us a deep respect for all persons:  
the family, the unborn, the young, the adult,  
the sick, the disabled, the abused, the imprisoned,  
the aged, the dying, the homeless, the unemployed,  
and the oppressed in any way.**

**Bless all of us and instill in us  
a deep love for your gift of life.**

**Through the intercession of Mary,  
Mother and Virgin,  
may all our words and actions  
foster reverence for human life.**

**May we be true witnesses to the truth  
that all life is precious and has sublime dignity.**

**Lead our nation and our world to this understanding  
so that we may be a people dedicated  
to the protection of all your sons and daughters.**

**We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ,  
the Word Who became flesh and lived among us.**

**Amen.**

## OCTOBER: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MONTH

About every 20 seconds, a woman is battered in our country. About two million children are abused each year by one or both parents or a relative. Thousands of elderly Americans are subjected to physical or verbal abuse each year. In our nation, people are more likely to be physically assaulted, beaten or even killed by a family member in their own home than any place else or by anyone else. Such violence occurs in families of all races, religious, education levels and income groups.

**Florida:** In 2018, 104,914 crimes of domestic violence were reported to Florida law enforcement agencies resulting in 64,573 arrests. During fiscal year 2017-18, Florida's certified domestic violence centers provided 669,785 nights of emergency shelter to 15,937 survivors of domestic violence and their children.

I am grateful to our *Council of Catholic Women* who will be helping us to focus on this issue during this month.

## UPCOMING ELECTION LEAVES CATHOLICS DIVIDED

In recent presidential elections, candidates have been very aware of the importance of the 'Catholic vote.' I believe out of the past six elections, the candidates who received the 'Catholic vote' won the election. This includes both President Obama and President Trump.

But as we all know, when it comes to presidential elections, Catholics are just as divided as the rest of the nation.

## Ideally, we should not be single-issue voters

Many people, including lots of Catholics, are called 'single-issue voters.' Their vote for a candidate is based on a single issue. For example, many Catholics will vote for Donald Trump based on his policies regarding abortion. Other Catholics will vote for Joe Biden because they believe he will do a better job controlling the spread of the Coronavirus which has taken the lives of over 200,000 Americans. The virus is certainly a life issue. While we respect single-issue voters, ideally, a good Catholic should look at all the many other critical issues, and prayerfully decide which candidate will do better at resolving them. The following are some of the important issues we face as we vote this November.

**Protection of the Unborn.** As stated above, protection of the unborn is very important and it will be the reason

many Christians, including millions of Catholics, will vote for Donald Trump. But there are also millions of pro-life Catholics who will vote for Joe Biden, not because Biden is pro-choice but based on other issues that are important to them. For a Catholic to vote for a pro-choice candidate for the very reason that he/she *is* pro-choice would be a grave sin. But as we all know, there are millions of dedicated churchgoing Catholics who vote for Democrats because they believe they do a better job on other issues which also impact the lives of millions of people. During the past few months, I have communicated with dedicated Catholic parishioners, some of whom cannot understand how a good Catholic could vote for Joe Biden because he is pro-choice. But other dedicated Catholics are equally astounded on how a good Catholic could vote for Donald Trump because of the way he behaves (see Character of the Candidates, below).

Roe v Wade is probably not going to be overturned any time soon even with a majority of conservative Justices on the Supreme Court. In the meantime, the aim should be to reduce the number of abortions annually in our nation. Two keys to this are:

- ◆ Passing of certain laws by the Supreme Court that will help to limit access to abortion.
- ◆ Concrete outreach to women who are poor and have unplanned or crisis pregnancy. (This should be the aim of both parties.) One pro-life Catholic I know said that there were a lot fewer abortions during the Clinton presidency compared to the Reagan presidency. Remember, Clinton is the one who famously said that abortions should be "safe, legal and rare". I also heard that according to the CDC, there were fewer abortions during the Obama presidency compared to the Bush presidency. A key to reducing the number of abortions is supporting Crisis Pregnancy Centers and other similar agencies.

**Control of the Coronavirus.** At this time, over 200,000 Americans have lost their lives due to Covid-19 and millions have lost their jobs and businesses. As we have seen, people are bothered at the sight of President Trump's political rallies where social distancing and masks requirements are not observed. Does that seem like a responsible thing to do? This November, voters will decide who, going forward, will do a better job at controlling this huge threat to our lives.

**Healthcare.** All of us who have good health insurance know how blessed we are. Our Church teaches that good healthcare is a fundamental right of every human being. When it comes to healthcare, a huge issue is the coverage of pre-existing conditions. Another important consideration is care for the mentally ill. So many of our homeless population are homeless because of the lack of care for their mental illness. This November, voters will decide which party can deliver better on this important issue.

**Economy.** Which candidate and party will do a better job at resuscitating our economy and making it work for the greatest number of people? It has been said that when it comes to voting, most people ‘vote their pockets.’ While this is understandable, ideally, we don’t just vote our pockets. That would *not* be a vote for the common good.

**Immigration.** We all know our immigration system is broken and in need of much reform. Protection of its borders is a right of every nation. But highly developed countries like America have a responsibility to take in its fair share of persons fleeing poverty, persecution and violence. There is also the issue of the DACA children—many of whom are now adults, having grown up here. Should these undocumented brothers and sisters be sent home or shouldn’t they be given a path to citizenship in our country? Which candidate do you think can do a better job with immigration?

**Religious Freedom.** Christians, including Catholics, do not want their religious rights infringed upon by government. During the Obama-Biden administration, this happened to the *Little Sisters of the Poor* and other faith-based schools and institutions which were being forced to purchase health insurance policies that infringed upon their beliefs.

**The Supreme Court.** Appointing Judges to the Supreme Court is one of the most important functions of the American presidency. During his four years as President, Jimmy Carter got to designate no Justices, while President Trump, in his first term in office, has appointed two Justices and may soon appoint a third. Personally, I have liked the Presidents choices for the Supreme Court. As history shows, Justices on the Supreme Court can be a mixed bag. We may love some of their decisions and not approve of others. When Justices are appointed, we may feel confident that they will vote one way but there is always the possibility that

they would later sway from the left or right to the middle. My hope is that Justices would do what they can to protect all life—born and unborn, as well as preserve religious freedom in our nation.

**Education School Choice.** Which candidate will do a better job at ensuring that all our young people get a good education? Which candidate will promote school choice, especially for children living in poor areas?

**Healing the Division in our Nation.** We are a very divided nation right now. There is a lot of civil unrest going on in many cities across America. Which candidate will do better at healing our nation and bringing us together again?

**Race Issues.** I believe that, sadly, there are lots of people in our country, and even in our parish, with racist tendencies. I am aware of the latter because parishioners have told me about their experiences. Having said that, I do not believe that America is a racist nation. If it was, it would not have elected a black President twice. When it comes to fixing the present civil unrest in our nation, each of us will have our own views on this. One can legitimately ask if Donald Trump is the one to heal our nation. But one can also ask what Barack Obama and Joe Biden did for the black population during their eight years in the White House.

### **Character of the Candidates**

This year, perhaps more than most previous times, the character of the candidates will be on the ballot.

In some conversations with parishioners some wonder how a good Catholic could vote for Joe Biden because he is prochoice and his party has moved mover and more to the left on this issue. Other Catholics wonder how any good Catholic could vote for Donald Trump because of his poor relationship with the truth, because of the ugly way he speaks about anyone who criticizes him, his egotistical and rude manner. His refusal to be transparent about how much taxes he has paid and seeming refusal to recognize the issue of climate change.

I realize I may have failed to cover other important concerns such as Foreign Policy, the National Debt, and what else?

As a registered Independent, my vote will be for the lesser of two evils rather than an enthusiastic vote for one candidate. In the end, I hope all of us will

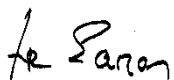
prayerfully weigh all the issues and ask the Holy Spirit to guide our vote. Good Catholics always take their Catholic faith into the voting booth. Ideally, our Catholic faith should guide us in *every* aspect of our lives.

As you probably know, *very* few pastors write a column like this one. Most choose to steer clear of controversy. I can say that I have honestly tried to be fair as I can to both sides. My favorite news person is Michael Smerconish—Saturday 9AM on CNN—the only CNN program that I enjoy watching.

**CCTN Channel 1045 on Spectrum.** On Sunday, 2:00-4:00pm, you can watch Mass from Holy Family Church in Orlando, followed by a program called *Rome Reports*. I watched this program last Sunday and found it very interesting.

*Vaticano* is a weekly show on Sundays at 11:00am on EWTN about happenings in the larger Church that we belong to. I really enjoy this program.

Have a blessed week,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr Sarah". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.