

I'm going to paint a picture of a certain nation: see if you can guess which one I am describing. A witness, living in this nation, describes it: Gluttony grows quickly. There are houses of [lavish] dimensions. A leader rose to power who claimed to be Christian. The cross and religious Christian symbols were removed from the public eye and a subtle persecution of the Catholic Church ensued. Christians' complaints were dismissed from the courts. The law in this nation placed all the state schools under the direction of godless people, and prohibited Christians from teaching their values at all public schools, forcing the youth to take in pagan principles in public schools. Another witness, living in this nation, says that the people in it live with the idea that, "My conscience is sufficient guide for me. A pure *heart* is what God looks for..." In this certain nation, "Women take drugs to insure barrenness [contraception]. Loose women are revealed by their tight-fitting clothing. Some use drugs to procure abortion."

Now before I go on, if anyone knows someone who *has* had an abortion, please tell her that there is hope. God is most merciful to the penitent sinner, and there is **no sin** that God *cannot* forgive when the person repents of having done it. Tell her that God's merciful love awaits her – to please come to confession and at last be at peace with God, experience His Mercy, and be at peace with herself once again...

Now, on February 20, 1906, Pope St. Pius X sent a letter to the Spanish people, on the duty of voting, saying that when the cause of religion or of the state is endangered, no one can be indifferent. St. Pius X repeated the same to the French in *Notre charge apostolique*. Leo XIII speaking of politics in *Immortale Dei* warned against Catholics allowing people to come to power who will not improve the nation.

Pope Pius XI in the encyclical to Mexico *Firmissimam constantiam*, March 28, 1937 said: "A Catholic will take care not to pass over his right to vote when the good of the Church or of the country requires it." *AAS* 29, 189. Ven. Pope Pius XII said in 1946, "The exercise of the right to vote is an act of **grave responsibility**..." *AAS* 38, 187. Pope Pius XII, in a speech given on September 11, 1947, said, "There is a heavy responsibility on everyone... who has the right to vote, *especially when the interests of religion are at stake*; abstention in this case is in itself, it should be thoroughly understood, **a grave and a fatal sin of omission**." When there was a threat to the Church in Italy in 1948, Pope Pius XII said, "In the present circumstances it is strictly obligatory for whoever has the right... to take part in the elections. He who abstains, particularly through indolence or from cowardice, thereby commits **a grave sin, a mortal offense**." *AAS* 40, 119.

So, what does a conscientious Catholic do when one has two major candidates, both of questionable moral character? In 1921, in a letter from the French hierarchy to all the Catholics of France, the bishops wrote, "It is your duty to vote wisely; that is to say, in such a way as not to waste your votes. It would be better to cast them for candidates who, although not giving complete satisfaction to all our legitimate demands, would lead us to expect from them a line of conduct useful to the country, rather than to keep your votes for others whose program indeed may be more perfect, but whose almost certain defeat might open the door to the enemies of religion and of the social order." **St. Robert Bellarmine** even pointed out in his work *De laicis* that some rulers who were personally immoral sometimes do more good than harm, such as the Kings Saul and Solomon.

The traditional theologian Tanqueray said that if the vote is between two evil persons, however one is worse than the other, one may vote for the less evil and most profitable to the cause of good. (*Tomus Tertius, De Variis Statuum Obligationibus, Caput I, De officiis laicorum*, n. 999).

Prummer, another traditional theologian, says the same. **The Dominican Merkelbach** states that when given a choice between two unworthy candidates, it is licit to elect the better candidate to prevent a more unworthy candidate from coming into power if there is no hope that a good candidate will be elected. He adds the following admonition: “Voters who, through grave fault by abstaining from voting do not stop an evil decision, election, or law from coming to pass, if they are bound by a specific duty to stop a foreseen harm which follows, are cooperators in evil.” (*Summa Theologiae Moralis, Tomus Secundus, Tractatus De Virtute Cardinali Justitiae, Tertia Pars, Sectio A, De Justitia Commutativa*, n. 316) He also says in his tract on justice that “by the virtue of distributive justice one should elect the more worthy candidate, not absolutely, but among those that can be had. If the vote for a more worthy candidate will not be beneficial, then one can elect a less worthy candidate to avoid the election of the more unworthy candidate.” (*Summa Theologiae Moralis, Tomus Secundus, Tractatus De Virtute Cardinali Justitiae, Quarta Pars, De Justitia Distributiva, Questio Secunda*, n. 619) Since the act of voting is good, it is lawful to vote for such an unworthy candidate provided there is a proportionate cause for the evil done and the good lost. *These three moral theologians were used in nearly every seminary in the early 1900s – there are others as well: I’m just citing these three.*

Every traditional moral theologian that I found said that a citizen may elect an unworthy candidate in order to avoid the election of a more unworthy candidate. It is lawful to vote for a perfect moral candidate, a perfectly prolife candidate, that has no chance of winning but one must weigh the prudence of this when a vote for the perfect candidate might take away votes for another candidate who could actually win, preventing the *worst* candidate from gaining power. Included in ‘voting your conscience’ must be the reason why one didn’t use his or her vote to exclude the more unworthy candidate, who was going to promote greater evil, from being elected when one *could* have.

So, that being understood, what are the issues that are important in this election?

Well, how many of us would vote for anyone who *actively supports* the killing of your children or let such a person come to power? 1.2 million children are killed by abortion each year. Though they’re not *your* children, these are *someone’s* children; they are **God’s children** – and if one truly calls Christ the Lord, *why wouldn’t one use one’s vote to defend God’s children?*

Mother Teresa of Calcutta said, “The greatest misery of our times is the generalized abortion of children.”

Cardinal Burke once said, “You can never vote for someone who favors absolutely the right ... to destroy a human life in [the] womb... Catholic politicians who support abortion rights may **not** receive Holy Communion and Catholics who know of the politicians’ voting record on these issues cannot vote for them and retain ‘a clear conscience.’ Bishop Emeritus Martino of Scranton put it this way: Even if a candidate were “*right*’ on taxes, education, health care, immigration, and the economy [it] fails to make up for the error of disregarding the value of a **human life.**”

*Therefore, given that voting is a serious moral obligation, we can conclude that anyone who knowingly votes for a candidate who is **decidedly pro-abortion**, instead of a candidate who is **pro-life** or who would at least*

*limit abortions compared to another who **promotes** abortion, such a voter would commit a **grievous sin** and cannot receive Holy Communion.*

So where do the candidates themselves stand? The NARAL called Clinton the “most unapologetic champion” of abortion ever nominated (Daily Caller, 7/29/2016), whereas the same group said that Trump’s election would be a “disaster” for abortion rights.

Trump: “I am prolife. I did not always hold this position, but I had a significant personal experience that brought the precious gift of life into perspective for me.” During a televised debate he told the nation, “The [Supreme Court] justices that I am going to appoint will be prolife,” and then even spoke about overturning Roe v. Wade (the Supreme Court decision allowing abortion).

Clinton: Clinton said, “We need a Supreme Court who will stand up for” abortion (“women’s rights”). Anyone who votes for a candidate who believes *that* over another who promises to appoint prolife justices commits a mortal sin. “I feel that it is important that we **not** reverse Roe v. Wade...” Anyone who votes for such a candidate over another who wants to reverse Roe v. Wade commits a mortal sin.

What about the protection the Catholic Church today – *that* issue? Clinton’s senior staff *mocks* Catholic beliefs, saying their needs to be a ‘Catholic Spring’, that is a revolution against the Catholic hierarchy. Quite different from Trump, who invited pro-lifers to New York to advise him, including priests – I *know* one of the priests: this priest himself told me that before the meeting Trump even pointed to the priest and said ‘this is the most important man in the room.’

Now, I’m not telling you who to vote for; but I *am* pointing out the moral position of the major candidates and the moral implications *for your soul* of voting for either one. This isn’t meddling in politics – *they* are the ones who have forayed into moral and religious issues, which is our domain.

Remember the nation I was describing at the beginning of this sermon? ...the nation filled with gluttony, lavish homes, Christian symbols removed from the public, Christian interests dismissed by the courts, pagan principles taught in public schools, people inventing their own morality, contraception, immodesty, abortion? *Which nation was this?* The nation I was actually describing was the **4th century Roman Empire**, under the leadership of Julian the Apostate – one bad president: 3.5 years in office – did this damage. *That* society turned around and the Catholic Church later *flourished* in it, but it didn’t happen overnight. Ours can turn around too, but it’s not going to happen by November 8th. At this point, it is *damage control* – can our nation and our Church afford four more years of a person who has promised to support the killing of children in the womb and whose staff is anti-Catholic?

If one does not use one’s vote to limit the evil in our nation, how will one go before God and explain that one *could* have used one’s vote to keep the worst candidate out of office *and did **not*** do so? May God guide our decision.