



Dear Friends,

With only days to go before the election, political campaigning has gone berserk! You can't turn the TV on without a cascade of political ads flowing across your screen. Over and over we've been subjected to the faults of this one or that one; how electing he or she will set off the end of the world; or how much of a sleazebag this or that one is. In the midst of this chaotic maelstrom of political hocus pocus we citizens still need to choose who we will vote for. This is our future we are setting in motion. And for us Catholics we have the added problem of finding the candidate who respects our moral values. And that's a major problem.

I think most Catholic people of good will look for a candidate who follows our moral principles. The trouble is all candidates have the need to appeal to as broad a section of the people as possible. That means they need to make compromises which may result in an immoral position, as far as we are concerned. But when you stop and think about this, we are looking for a saint, a migrant son-sinner. But candidates are humans, that is, sinners.

Just look at the TV ads. Candidates through their "spin doctors" twist the truth (lie) or use half-truths (lie) or smear their opponents with spurious accusations (lies). [All this violates the 8th Commandment — Thou shalt not bear false witness.] Sometimes we may find a candidate who opposes abortion but supports euthanasia or executions. As Cardinal Bernadine pointed out decades ago, being "pro-life" means seeing life as a "seamless garment," that is, promoting life from conception to natural death *and every moment in between*. To do less is to violate the 5th Commandment — thou shalt not kill. Sexual misconduct violates the 6th Commandment and bribes or mismanagement of monies the 7th. Politicians are sinners just like us.

When we speak of human life, we need to consider more than just the physical. Sociology and psychology have taught that to achieve a full human life we need more than just our bodily needs. We need safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem. Research has shown that infants who are kept clean and well fed but are not picked up, held and coddled will die! From the first we *need* human physical contact (belonging). Our Black brothers and sisters have been telling us lately of their being denied full equality (self-esteem). And all of us know love means more than physical contact, we need to be nurtured. Being pro-life means paying attention to all of these things.

The Holy Father has noted that we cannot simply focus on one issue as if there's no connection to the others. How can we feel safe when folks in our cities are solving personal issues by killing? How can we rest easy with Climate Change threatening our planet? Think of all the people in refugee camps with not real life or hope for their children. Can we simply ignore them?

What of the children separated from their parents at the border? Do we look the other way? When and how can we come to recognize that we are part of *one* race living on the only planet we have?

So, how are we to figure out how to vote with a clear conscience?

On this point I can only speak for myself. Given we need to care about *all aspects* that make up human life; given politicians will distort the truth and hold positions that may be contrary to our moral code; and given our God is “the Lord and Giver of life” (from our Creed) leaves me to choose the candidate(s) who will lead our people in the direction of a better life for all. I may not approve of all that candidate’s positions, but this one is more in line with all of human life than the other. Moral theologians label this choice opting for the lesser of two evils.

Needless to say, I pray a lot over how I should vote. I also call to mind that the Bible notes how God sometimes chooses the person we would consider the wrong person for the job. So, once I have examined the positions of the candidate, I decide whom I will vote for and leave the rest in the hands of God. Is it perfect? No. But neither am I. Is it satisfactory? No. But it’s the best I can do by God’s grace.

I hope this may help some of you in your election decisions. May God watch over our country.

*Fr. Denis*