

From the Office of Peace, Justice, and Ecological Integrity
Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth
Reflection for Election 2020 – August 27, 2020

From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*:

Everyone living in this country is called to participate in public life and contribute to the common good. In *Rejoice and Be Glad*, Pope Francis writes:

Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice, and universal peace. . . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body, and soul, to giving your best to this endeavor. The call to holiness, he writes, requires a “firm and passionate” defense of “the innocent unborn.” “Equally sacred,” he further states, are “the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection.” . . . The threat of abortion remains our preeminent priority because it directly attacks life itself, because it takes place within the sanctuary of the family, and because of the number of lives destroyed. At the same time, we cannot dismiss or ignore other serious threats to human life and dignity such as racism, the environmental crisis, poverty, and the death penalty.

(*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, Introductory Note)

Reflection:

1. Access to abortion is one of the most divisive issues in American society and, inevitably for Catholics, a central issue in discernment about voting. The study *How American Understand Abortion* linked below arrives at several conclusions about the state of discourse about abortion in the United States. One is “Americans can enter conversations about abortion by provisionally setting aside “pro-choice” and “pro-life” labels and the perceptions they carry.” Enter into a time of prayer. However you identify yourself, what pre-conceptions arise in you when you hear a person identified as “pro-choice” and “pro-life?” What experiences have you had that led you to those preconceptions? Are they fair and fact-based? Have you done the personal research to find out? Be in prayer with someone who holds the opposite stance on abortion than you. What concerns of theirs do you share in common?

2. Another conclusion of the study: “Americans can enter conversations about abortion around abortion, through talk of relationships, economics, health, parenthood, social support, jobs, inequality, and more.” Hold in prayer some who has had an abortion, perhaps someone you know personally. How did each of these factors enter into the decision?

3. Another conclusion of the study: “Americans can enter conversations about abortion with the common goal of reducing circumstances that give rise to abortion decisions.” Prayerfully examine the records of the two major parties presidential candidates. The attached document from NETWORK will help you do that. Which policies seem to make more possible the goal that the majority of Americans share: “reducing circumstances that give rise to abortion decisions?”

Deeper Dive:

- Find attached the *Equally Sacred Priorities* document of NETWORK that rates the presidential candidates of the two major parties, President Donald Trump, and Vice-president Joseph Biden on the variety of life issues that Pope Francis calls “equally sacred.”
- Read the landmark study [How Americans Understand Abortion](https://mcgrath.nd.edu/news/national-abortion-study-finds-out-of-touch-labels-knowledge-gaps-appetite-for-moral-discussion/) from the McGrath Institute for Church Life of the University of Norte Dame.
<https://mcgrath.nd.edu/news/national-abortion-study-finds-out-of-touch-labels-knowledge-gaps-appetite-for-moral-discussion/>

Prayer:

Loving God, Open our hearts to those most in need:

The unemployed parent worried about feeding his or her children.

The woman who is underpaid, harassed, or abused.

The Black man or woman who fear for their lives.

The immigrant at the border, longing for safety.

The homeless person looking for a meal.

The LGBT teen who is bullied.

The unborn child in the womb.

The inmate on death row.

Help us to be a nation where every life is sacred, all people are loved, and all are welcome.

Amen.

Fr. James Martin, S.J.

EQUALLY SACRED PRIORITIES

FOR VOTERS IN THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

In recent years, Pope Francis has provided explicit instruction on the many ways we are called to defend, promote, and protect the sacredness of life. In his writing and speaking, Pope Francis makes it clear: **abortion is not the only issue that matters.**

Faith does not fit into political parties neatly. Still, we are called to engage in politics. This is no small feat. It requires us to be informed, to develop our conscience, to connect with like-minded people, and listen to those who think differently.

Here you will find a comparison of President Donald Trump and Vice President Joe Biden's policy positions in the areas Pope Francis names as "equally sacred" to the defense of the unborn.



We invite you to consider this information prayerfully.

Gaudete et Exsultate

March 2018

101. Our defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born.

General Audience

June 3, 2020

We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.

Defense of the unborn is clear.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Seeks to overturn <i>Roe v. Wade</i>	✓	✗
Would increase pregnant women's access to health care and nutrition	✗	✓
Addresses maternal mortality, particularly for Black women	✗	✓

Equally sacred are those already born.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Supports families in the tax code and family-friendly workplace policies	✗	✓
Advocates for domestic violence and sexual assault survivors	✗	✓
Rejects racism, xenophobia; supports policies that address systemic racism	✗	✓
Supports Native American tribes' sovereignty and prosperity	✗	✓
Opposes discrimination against LGBTQ+ people and disabled people	✗	✓
Opposes the death penalty	✗	✓

Equally sacred are...

Gaudete et Exsultate
March 2018

101. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection. We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty.

Evangelii Gaudium
November 2013

53. Today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills.

People and families on the economic margins.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Believes housing is a human right	✗	✓
Supports the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	✗	✓
Would protect people from predatory financial practices	✗	✓

Those who are sick, disabled, and older adults.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Protects the Affordable Care Act	✗	✓
Opposes cuts to and restrictions on Medicaid	✗	✓
Supports the priorities of the disability community	✗	✓
Supports the health and wellbeing of older adults	✗	✓

Victims of human trafficking and economic slavery.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Upholds the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act	✗	✓
Supports raising the minimum wage	✗	✓
Protects workers' right to organize	✗	✓

"A good Catholic meddles in politics."

-Pope Francis

If we are pro-life...

Gaudete et Exsultate
March 2018

102. We often hear it said that, with respect to relativism and the flaws of our present world, the situation of migrants, for example, is a lesser issue.

Some Catholics consider it a secondary issue compared to the “grave” bioethical questions.

That a politician looking for votes might say such a thing is understandable, but not a Christian, for whom the only proper attitude is to stand in the shoes of those brothers and sisters of ours who risk their lives to offer a future to their children.

We cannot ignore economic inequality.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Seeks to accurately measure and address poverty	✗	✓
Supports a just tax code	✗	✓

We cannot overlook the situation of migrants.

	<u>TRUMP</u>	<u>BIDEN</u>
Opposes expanding the U.S.-Mexico border wall	✗	✓
Supports DACA protections	✗	✓
Bases immigration policy on family unity	✗	✓
Ensures humane treatment at the border and by interior enforcement	✗	✓
Extends support to immigrant families in the U.S. and treats them with respect	✗	✓
Respects and observes international laws on asylum	✗	✓

President Trump and Vice President Biden's positions were taken from their campaign websites, the official White House website, Vice President Biden's voting record as a six-term Senator, public speaking engagements, and their verified Twitter accounts.

Learn more:

www.networkadvocates.org/2020election/scorecard

