

Election Day: The Coin of Caesar - Catholic Family News

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Editor's Note: The following article is based on a sermon delivered by the author on Sunday, Oct. 21, 2018 (22nd after Pentecost, Traditional Latin Mass). We offer it here as a reminder to voters – especially those in the United States, who will cast their ballots today (Nov. 6, 2018) – that all of us have a serious obligation to vote in accordance with divine and natural law. No one, under any circumstance, can vote for a candidate or measure that promotes intrinsic evil (e.g. abortion, contraception, euthanasia, homosexual “marriage”).

In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

With Election Day coming up, Our Lord's interpretation of the image on the Roman coin in today's Gospel reading is very relevant: “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's” (Mt 22:21). How does this comport with the idea of so-called “separation of Church and State”?

First of all, to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God, the things that are God's,” is a teaching of Our Lord and God, Jesus Christ. It must be obeyed. This teaching of the Son of God is *not* the same thing as the secular notion of “separation of Church and State.”

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1864, the great Pope Pius IX issued a document as an annex to the encyclical *Quanta Cura* known as “The Syllabus of Errors.” The Syllabus condemned a total of 80 errors or heresies. In Error #55, under the sub-heading of “Errors Concerning the Church and Her Rights,” the following statement was condemned: “The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.” Separation of Church and State, therefore, is a *condemned teaching* that is *inconsistent* with the teaching of Christ and His Holy Catholic Church.

Concerning this issue, Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., once said:

“When Jesus tells the Pharisees and Herodians in the Gospel of Matthew (22:21) to ‘render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's,’ He sets the framework for how we should think about religion and the state even today. Caesar does have rights. We owe civil authority our respect and appropriate obedience. But that obedience is limited by what belongs to God. Caesar is not God. Only God is God, and the state is subordinate and accountable to God for its treatment of human persons, all of whom were created by God. Our job as believers is to figure out what things belong to Caesar and what things belong to God – and then put those things in right order in our own lives, and in our relations with others.”

Archbishop Chaput continued:

“The ‘separation of Church and state’ does not mean – and it can never mean – separating our Catholic Faith from our public witness, our political choices and our political actions. That kind of separation would require Christians to deny who we are; to repudiate Jesus when He commands us to be ‘leaven in the world’ and to ‘make disciples of all nations.’”

Bishop Thomas John Paprocki from Springfield, Illinois, warned of voting for candidates for political office who supported “intrinsic evils.” An intrinsic evil is something that is evil all the time, under any circumstance. Intrinsic evils would include abortion (aka: “pro-choice”) and so-called “same-sex marriage.” In contrast, the implementation of legitimate immigration policies, or opposition to so-called “global warming” or “climate change” regulations, are not evil – certainly not intrinsically evil – and may even be considered as good. Likewise, the death penalty, which is supported by centuries of Church teaching, cannot be seen as an intrinsic evil.

Bishop Paprocki stated:

“Some who try to navigate this labyrinth of moral analysis simply rationalize their way to a desired conclusion, for example, by saying that voting for a pro-choice candidate is justified by their support for other ‘social justice’ causes. But such people should apply the Golden Rule by placing themselves in the shoes of the people who are going to be killed by abortions. Would these voters really think it is more ‘just’ to vote for the ‘pro-choice’ candidate if they or their own children or brothers and sisters were going to be deliberately killed – along with 1.3 million others? Not very likely, is it?”

Consequently, candidates and the voters who campaign and vote for them who support intrinsic evils are putting their eternal salvation at risk. Bishop Paprocki explained that while he is “not telling you which party or which candidates to vote for or against,” he is warning that “a vote for a candidate who promotes actions or behaviors that are intrinsically evil and gravely sinful makes you morally complicit and places the eternal salvation of your own soul in serious jeopardy.”

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s” is not the same thing as the secular notion of “separation of Church and State.” Just because one uses the “coin of the realm” does not mean one must adhere to secular or politically correct values. When you walk into the voting booth, you must *not* leave your Catholic identity behind – at the risk of your eternal salvation.

Many in the Church and world live, teach, and vote as if there were no danger of going to hell for all eternity. Someone once said to Padre Pio, “I don’t believe in hell.” Without missing a beat, the saintly man of God responded: “You will when you get there.”

Padre Pio and Sister Lucia of Fatima used to come out of their cloistered monasteries to vote on Election Day. You can be sure that the candidates they voted for were not opposed to Catholic teaching. You can be sure that they never supported intrinsic evils of any kind.

If we wish to go to Heaven and become saints, we would be wise to follow the example of Padre Pio and Sister Lucia and vote a well-formed Catholic conscience on Election Day, consistent with the traditional teachings of Christ and His Church. This will lead you to peace in this life, and one day happiness forever in the life of the world to come.

In Nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.