

**Dcn Bob Burkhard's Homily**  
**October 18-19, 2008**

“Then repay to Cesar what belong to Cesar and to God what belongs to God”. Finally, the Pharisees have their chance to get Jesus. They hate Jesus so much that they join forces with the Herodians. The Herodians were supporters of Herod and were enemies of the Pharisees themselves. The question they came up with would certainly bring him down, no matter how he answered. If he said it was unlawful to pay the tax, the Herodians would have reported him to the government, and he would have been arrested. If he said it was lawful, he would have been discredited in the eyes of the people; they really hated taxes, as many people do, sound familiar? But they hated them for religious reasons. For the Jews there was only one King, and to pay money or goods to an earthly King would be to recognize him as a valid King, which would insult their God and King.

But Jesus was wise. He asked to see a denarius, a coin which was stamped with the emperor's head. Then he asked, “Whose image is this?” and they replied, Caesars. Then he said them, “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God”. The answer was profound and not what they expected. Jesus' words showed that he recognized civil authority and its rights, but made it quite clear that the superior rights of God must be respected.

Two weeks ago on Respect Life Sunday, Fr. Doug gave us a great homily on our responsibilities as Catholics when it comes to voting and life issues, but I could not proclaim today's Gospel this close to our national elections without adding to his message. We as Christians have a double citizenship. We are citizens of this great country and we owe many things to it. But we are also citizens of heaven; there are matters of religion and of principle in which the responsibility is to our God. A proper understanding of “separation of church and state” does not imply a separation of faith from political life.

We as Catholics not only have a right to vote, but we have an obligation to participate in our election process. But we must be informed both on what the Church teaches and holds to be truth and where the candidates stand on certain issues. Responsible citizenship means making choices, not simply voting the way our grandparents did. Citizenship is an exercise in moral judgment not in tribal loyalty. On most issues that come before us as Catholic voters we can take one side or the other and not act contrary to our faith. Most matters don't have a “Catholic Position”. But there are some issues that are so important that there is only one position that

stands in the teaching of the Gospel. The Catechism teaches - “It is a part of the Church’s mission to pass moral judgments even in matters related to politics, whenever the fundamental rights of man or the salvation of souls requires it”. We must obey God rather than man.

As Archbishop Chaput, the Archbishop of Denver, says, “There is a bottom line in all this: the life issues are foundational... because the act of dehumanizing and killing the unborn child attacks human dignity in a uniquely grave way”.

There are five non-negotiable issues that are fundamental for us. They are called non-negotiable because they concern actions that are morally wrong and must never be promoted by law. Citizens vote in favor of these evils if they vote for candidates who propose to advance them Catholics should not vote for anyone who intends to push programs or laws that are intrinsically evil.

These non-negotiable are taken from the voters guide for serious Catholics, published by Catholic Answers.

1. The first of these and most foundational is abortion. The Church teaches that human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception.
2. The second is Euthanasia. Often disguised as mercy killing. Euthanasia like abortion is homicide. No one has the right to take his own life (suicide) and no one has the right to take the life any innocent person. In euthanasia the ill or elderly are killed out of a misplaced sense of compassion, but true compassion cannot include murder.
3. The third non-negotiable is Fetal Stem Cell research. Human embryos are human beings. Respect for the dignity of a human being excludes all experimental manipulation or exploitation of the human embryo. Recent scientific advances show that any medical cure that might come from experimenting on fetal stem cells can be developed by using adult stem cells instead. Adult stem cells can be developed without harm to adults. So there is no longer a medical argument in favor of using fetal stem cells.
4. Fourth is Human Cloning. Attempts for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality though cloning are to be considered to be contrary to moral law. Human cloning also ends up being a form of homicide because the rejected or unsuccessful clones are destroyed yet each clone is a human being.

5. The fifth non-negotiable issue that we have to deal with is Homosexual Marriage. True marriage is a union of one man and one woman. Legal recognition of any other form of marriage undermines true marriage, and legal recognition of homosexual unions actually does homosexual persons a disfavor by encouraging them to persist in what is an objectively immoral arrangement.

Candidates who endorse or promote any of the five non-negotiables should be considered to have disqualified themselves from holding public office and you should not vote for them. You should make your choices from the remaining candidates.

There are no issues that have been discussed or presented in any party platform that are more important than the protection of human life. If a candidate that is running for public office cannot be trusted with the most foundational life issues, then how can we expect they can be trusted in any way.

We hear a lot about the war in Iraq, and issues of terrorism, there is much debate about international issues and issues about our economy, the price of oil, the stock market, taxes, bailouts, and failed economic policies. We hear about energy independence, health care, Medicare reform, tax reform and all kinds of change. These are important issues, but I assure you that there is no issue that is more important than the protection of innocent human life. There are none of these issues alone or combined that trumps the intentional killing of 2000 innocent unborn children in this country daily.

There is one thing I agree with and that is that we need change in this country. But the change that we must have is not being debated. This change we need is a change in heart and mind toward human life. We especially as Catholics must become one with Christ. One voice for the protection of all human life from conception to natural death. And one voice for the protection of the definition of marriage as declared by Christ's church. This country must be changed to recognize God as Creator and Lord and the first reading says, "I am the Lord and there is no other, there is no God besides me". We need to bring God back into our homes, schools and communities. Catholics must make a stand as the Body of Christ.

I'm Deacon Bob and I pray that God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit approve this message!