

# WHEN A CATHOLIC VOTES

(based on remarks made to the Long Island Chapter of Legatus)

Catholic social teaching is a treasure for us Catholics. From Leo XIII in 1891 through St. John Paul II, Benedict and Francis, the Church has developed principles based on Scripture, the Church's experience and right reason that we are called to apply into the world as our way of contributing to the good of the communities we live in. My inspiration in this column comes from Pope Benedict XVI, in two of his letters: **God is Love (Deus Caritas Est, 12/25/05)** and **Charity in Truth (Caritas In Veritate, 6/29/09)**. With these two letters, Pope Benedict took the principles of Catholic social teaching and infused them with the profound and beautiful truth that the God who created us in his image and in love, sent his Son to redeem us and is present to us in all our daily living, in the choices we make and the way we interact with one another. Thus God is actively present in our application of these principles and we act guided by a loving God who wants us to build up a world that more and more shines forth as a world redeemed by Jesus Christ.

*Faith, love and ethics are interwoven as a single entity ... Love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed in the Bible, a freely bestowed experience of love from within to be shared with others (Deus Caritas Est) ... This is a force that builds community, it brings all people together without imposing barriers or limits, called into being with the God who is love. (Caritas in Veritate)*

Within this perspective of God and God's love, we are called to live the truth in charity and apply the principles of Catholic social teaching to a very concrete act: **FOR WHOM SHALL I VOTE IN THE COMING ELECTIONS?** To that end, I want to offer two couplets, a few examples and a conclusion inspired by Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus.

## **FIRST COUPLET:** **the human person and the common good.**

These go together. The human person has dignity because every person is created in God's image and by our very being we are social, born to live in society that respects every person's dignity.

This includes human rights and human responsibilities. But note the source: our dignity and unique value are that we humans alone are created by God in his image. Thus, we are intrinsically social for the same reason: God, who in his very Godhead is communal — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our life

in society mirrors the community of love of the triune God. Therefore, we have rights because we are human — not because we are male or female — regardless of our background, our sexual orientation or any other individualistic claim. When St. Teresa of Calcutta spoke at Harvard, she reminded her audience, and us, that a society that destroys its own children in the womb is bent on its own destruction. All human life deserves reverence and protection. **Human life is the one created reality that images God.** Thus, every human being has human dignity, human rights and responsibilities, because they are God's highest expression of life.

Because human life is not individualistic, but social and communal, we can achieve fulfillment in this life only in a social and communitarian way of living. That is the common good. We need healthy societies. The first and fundamental one is the family, the only truly natural society, without which no other society can flourish. Hence this couplet reminds us that when we vote, we vote pro-family.

When we vote, we also have to vote to promote the common good. Our rights and responsibilities are exercised in relation to others. The common good recognizes that our own legitimate desires and aims must not ever be at the expense of the common good of all. This is a responsibility for all of us, according to our capacity to further the good of the person and the good of society, spiritually as materially.

The opposite is going on in our society today. Individuals claim, as their individual "rights," false values that are, in truth, self-invented privileges. They insist that their privileges are seen as absolutes. The common good of society is by and large ignored. When you lose the sense of responsibility for the common good, you are left with a cacophony of voices, each looking out for itself at the expense of the whole. If they are rights, they must be in harmony with God and inhere to all as humans, not because someone feels aggrieved or some group wants special privileges.

## **SECOND COUPLET:** **subsidiarity and solidarity.**

The first protects our local family and our organization of local social, economic and civil life.

We are free to join together for the good of the person, the family and our own shared interests. Groups that share common goals and interests should be left to govern themselves and to achieve their own legitimate goals, so long as they do not do so at the expense of the common good of all.



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Solidarity is the recognition that, as human beings, social persons, in need of one another, we build the structures that guarantee that persons and smaller groups are protected from exploitation. Solidarity is based on our common humanity and the political and civic groups we need to guarantee the good of all. It is what government does when the challenges are bigger than we could possibly handle locally. It mirrors our common humanity and serves that common good. At the same time, subsidiarity is so related to solidarity that they exist in a healthy tension. Solidarity guarantees that we do not take our football and go home. Subsidiarity guarantees that the power of the state or other type of force does not take our football away from us and regulate every aspect of our lives, private and public. This is exactly what is wrong with our American society today.

**Let me give a few examples.**

### **LABOR UNIONS**

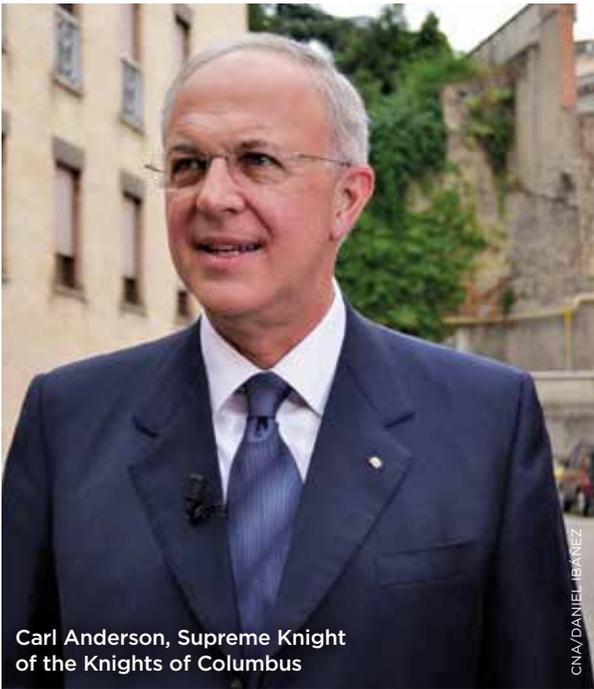
The right to organize to pursue the good ends of just wages, fair labor laws, good working conditions and a family income are all proper for this important intermediate and powerful force in society. Yet that does not mean that labor unions can pursue their own goals at the expense of other legitimate groups. And when unions decided that they would become part of one party, they lose their inner connection to the common good and become captive to the political party through which they want to exercise their power. The common good is lost sight of, and they have sold their legitimate goals to political power.

### **UNIVERSITIES**

Universities play a very important role in our society. But what has happened? Once they accept any and every handout the government offers them, then they risk losing their own legitimate goal of seeking truth. They become pawns of the government world. They get hooked. They raise their tuition rates. They opt for whatever the government wants to shell out. Then parents and kids are fooled into thinking that student loans can go on and on; they will not come back to bite them because they are not told that universities are now hostages to government regulations. Truth is compromised. The universities are compromised into becoming “politically correct,” insisting that their students be the same.

### **WHAT IS HAPPENING?**

Society starts to split into pressure groups. The more powerful use their power to advance themselves at the expense of the rest. Think of “Occupy Wall Street”. That kind of crass pressure of street politics is destructive of serious dialogue because its aim is to destroy the enemy, not to advance common good or solidarity. Another example was the embarrassing spectacle of the sit-down in the Congress last spring. A favorite tool of this is the vocabulary of victimization. Destructive and disruptive actions are justified because of claimed past or present exploitation. Thus, such actions are justified to gain control, while, at the same time, denying any voice to another point of view. Society is wrong. So the pressure groups have the right to whatever they want. These are the very tactics Lenin used in 1917 to steal the revolution from the socialists. This is bolshevism.



Carl Anderson, Supreme Knight of the Knights of Columbus



Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

Bernard Lonergan rightly called this the spiral of decline. An unholy alliance of special interest factions with wealthy donors and politicians whom they have bought to advance this agenda make a very potent force for the bad. And this will continue. Or will it? **The spiral of decline can be reversed.** However, it is not easy, because the new elites have a lot to lose if we restore a society based on human dignity, common good, subsidiarity and solidarity — in short, civic and social harmony and peace.

**So I come to my conclusion. This will continue until enough people get sick and tired of it. Here you come in. Will you together stand up and insist on honesty, integrity and truth?**

#### **MY EXAMPLES ARE REAL!**

The education tax credit bill benefits all children in public as well as private, Catholic and Jewish schools. However, the teachers' union in this state has the power to block it — and does. I care as much for public schools on Long Island as I do our own schools, because our children are in them. They are true schools that guarantee our future. Simple justice calls for the education tax credit bill to be passed. Yet Catholic bishops and laity are treated as offenders in the halls of Albany; and even at times are subject to subtle threats.

As currently presented, the Markey-Hoylman bill regarding protection of minors who have been abused is an unjust bill that targets the Catholic Church, but exempts public institutions like the schools in the city where there has been more than a few instances of this horrible and disgusting crime. Yet will the speaker allow debate on the Cusick-Lanza bill, which extends the statute of limitations and offers protections to children and training for adults that the Catholic Church has been using these past 12 years?

**BUT, above all and over all, the no. 1 issue that is more fundamental and crucial than any other is abortion — the direct taking of innocent life, which is financed by**

**government funds to Planned Parenthood. That organization is the essential tool of the hidden, left-wing billionaires who want to undermine our society.** Support of abortion by a candidate for public office, some of whom are Catholics, even if they use the phony “personally opposed but” line, is reason sufficient unto itself to disqualify any and every such candidate from receiving our vote

Let me close with what Carl Anderson, a great American and one of the leading lay Catholic voices in our country, said at the Supreme Convention of the Knights of Columbus in Toronto in August:

***“ABORTION IS NOT JUST ANOTHER POLITICAL ISSUE, BUT IN REALITY A LEGAL REGIME THAT HAS RESULTED IN MORE THAN 40 MILLION DEATHS. WHAT POLITICAL ISSUE COULD OUTWEIGH THIS HUMAN DEVESTATION? ABORTION IS DIFFERENT. ABORTION IS THE KILLING OF THE INNOCENT ON A MASSIVE SCALE. WE NEED TO END THE POLITICAL MANIPULATION OF CATHOLICS BY ABORTION ADVOCATES. IT IS TIME TO END THE ENTANGLEMENT OF CATHOLIC PEOPLE WITH ABORTION KILLING. IT IS TIME TO STOP CREATING EXCUSES FOR VOTING FOR PRO-ABORTION POLITICIANS.***

***WE WILL NEVER SUCCEED IN BUILDING A CULTURE OF LIFE IF WE CONTINUE TO VOTE FOR POLITICIANS WHO SUPPORT A CULTURE OF DEATH!”***

Dear friends, we have to begin to reverse the spiral of decline in our society. We have truth and virtue on our side. We need to become the purveyors of that truth and that virtue until our country, our nation, our society are all ready to embrace truth not falsehood; good not evil; life, not death. †