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Young Catholics, An Ancient Faith, A New Century

Bishop McElroy Delivers Powerful Message on Voting, Citizenship, and the Common Good

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https://millennialjournal.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/1509787_313143848833467_5211246166019703651_n.jpgEarlier this week, Bishop Robert McElroy of San Diego delivered a [speech](http://www.sdatholic.org/en-us/en-us/diocese/newsandcalendar.aspx#ICG_ETH_289?platform=hootsuite) (http://www.sdatholic.org/en-us/en-us/diocese/newsandcalendar.aspx#ICG_ETH_289?platform=hootsuite) at the Center for Catholic Thought and Culture on faithful citizenship, the common good, and the upcoming elections. Here are some key passages:

In Francis' message the core of the vocation of public service, and of all politics, is to promote the integral development of every human person and of society as a whole. It is a vocation that requires special and self-sacrificial concern for the poor, the unborn, the vulnerable and the marginalized. It is a commitment to pursue the common good over that of interest groups or parties or self-aggrandizement. It is a profoundly spiritual and moral undertaking.

This same spiritual and moral identity is also emblazoned upon the most foundational act of citizenship in our society, that of voting for candidates for office. Thus, ultimately it is to the citizens of our nation as a whole that the challenge of Pope Francis is directed. Catholic teaching proclaims

that voting is inherently an act of discipleship for the believer....

It is a core teaching of Catholic ecclesiology that the sanctification of the world falls primarily to lay women and men. And it is a core teaching of Catholic moral theology that it is deeply within the conscience of the individual believer that key moral decisions must be made. The foundational assertion of democracy is that the average citizen is best equipped to guide society through electoral choice. The corollary within Catholic teaching which supports the democratic impulse is the proposition that in discerning which candidate will best advance the common good, the prudential decision of each citizen remains paramount. Thus while bishops must teach on principles of moral judgment, and outline key elements of the common good which are at stake in a particular historical moment, they should refrain from favoring particular candidates....

At this moment there are five preeminent political issues facing the United States which are integrally related to the idea of life as both gift and responsibility.

The first of these is abortion. The direct destruction of more than one million human lives every year constitutes a grievous wound upon our national soul and the common good....

The second preeminent issue facing the United States today is poverty. In a world of vast wealth, more than five million children die every year from hunger, poor sanitation and the lack of potable water. Millions more die from a lack of basic medical care....

A third preeminent issue centering upon life as gift and responsibility is the care for the earth, our common home. The progressive degradation of the global environment has created increased poverty and death among many of the poorest peoples on earth. Each year thousands of species are destroyed, lost forever to our children and to the earth's future. Most chillingly of all, science has established the existence of anthropogenic climate change....

Another preeminent question at stake in the political common good of the United States today is assisted suicide. For at its core, assisted suicide is the bridgehead of a movement to reject the foundational understanding of life as gift and responsibility when confronting end-of-life issues....

The final preeminent political issue facing us in this national election is that of immigration. As bishop of this border diocese I weep at the human suffering, destruction of families, degradation of children and teen-agers, and division within our society which comes from our national inability to find a just and comprehensive solution to our broken immigration system....

Next Tuesday will be a test for our nation, a test about our ability to set aside the partisan rancor which divides us, and instead focus upon those central issues of the common good that confront us as a people. This test is deepened by our increasing recognition that voting is also a profound judgment about the character of the candidates, not only about their willingness and ability to enact what they have promised, but also because political leadership in our nation helps to forge and deepen, or to degrade and weaken the moral fabric of our society. The responsibility to vote stands as the primary call of citizenship in all democratic societies, and stands so particularly at this troubled moment in our national history.

Bishop McElroy also talked about healing the nation and fixing the "profound sickness of the soul in American political life":

For us to confront and eradicate this sickness of the soul, it is necessary that there be four substantial conversions within our political life which cannot be merely the work of elites, but an undertaking of the whole citizenry.

We must turn from warfare to governance. The long tradition of an American political culture which valued coherent and effective governance has largely been evacuated in recent decades. The “war-room” mentality of the perpetual campaign is deeply corrosive to our society and to our national well-being....

We must turn from a culture of grievance to a culture of solidarity....It will demand a rejection of the tribal element of politics which sees voting as the opportunity to advance the well-being of our race, our class, our religious community at the expense of others. It will entail a purging of the inherent human tendency to allow anger and wedge issues to infect our voting choices....

We must turn from selective outrage to tending the wounds among us. If solidarity is the pathway to unity in our nation, it is equally true that compassion for those who are hurting in every sector of our nation must be combined with care, analysis and action. The reality that young black men fear for their security when facing law enforcement, the sense of dispossession felt by young white men without a college education, the specter of deportation for mothers and fathers and children in the millions, rampant patterns of sexual harassment and assault directed against women, the fear that police face every day trying to protect society– these are wounds in our society which tear at our social fabric and constitute immense human suffering that must be addressed....

We must cease destroying the institutions which are necessary for our political life. The corrosive nature of our contemporary politics is accentuated by the overpowering trajectory in American political life which subjects virtually every governmental and private institution in society to partisan scrutiny and judgment.

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