

As we face another polarizing Presidential election in two weeks we must put aside these politicians' pride and focus on their policies. We don't have the luxury of cynicism and withdrawal because St. Augustine pointed out, we cannot complain about the 'times' for we are the 'times.'

Archbishop Charles Chaput wisely stated, *"We're Catholics before we're Democrats. We're Catholics before we're Republicans. We're even Catholics before we're Americans, because we know that God has a demand on us prior to any government demand on us. And this has been the story of the martyrs through the centuries."* This reminds us that every Christian has dual citizenship in their country and in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus was born into a politically charged world also. At his trial Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate, the local Roman authority. Pilate sarcastically asked, *"What is truth?"* Truth in our society is redefined again and again through the shifting sands of public opinion in what we call relativism. Pope Benedict XVI said, *"At the heart of every culture . . . is a consensus about the nature of reality and the moral good, and thus about the conditions for human flourishing. In America, that consensus, as enshrined in your nation's founding documents, was grounded in a worldview shaped not only by faith, but also a commitment to certain ethical principles deriving from nature and nature's God. Today, that consensus has eroded significantly . . ."*

Without Truth, we have no equality. Thomas Jefferson penned the Declaration of Independence believing that our nation was founded on God-given truths: *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights..."* We are not equal in talent, or a hundred other categories. What make us equal is being sons and daughters of the same God, working together for the common good in this democracy.

If we love our democracy, then we must save it remembering these four points: First, Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen wrote, *"A democratic state is built up from below – that is, from families and persons, each with inalienable rights; the totalitarian state is built from above by the edict of law or the decree of a dictator."* Since the family is the building block of society it must be promoted and protected. Second, St. Paul wrote, *"If any one will not work, let him not eat."* A democracy only works when we do. Sheen wrote, *"The political health of any nation can be measured by how much the people expect the state to give them and how little they expect to do for themselves, or how much they believe the world owes them a living."* Third, the more unrest and evil we stir up, the more the state will have to suppress its citizens. Sheen wrote, *"The only way ... people can prevent the state from controlling their lives is for them to control their own."* Lastly, religious freedom is based on the separation of Church and State. This is not meant to keep the influence of religion out of the State, but rather to keep the State from dictating our religious beliefs. This is why the first amendment, the first one our founding fathers wrote, protects our religious freedom. In a democracy, it is up to the people to give the State a conscience and a moral rudder.

There are many issues to be solved in our country and much room for debate on lesser topics. But not all issues are weighted the same and some are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor. These intrinsically evil acts must always be rejected and never supported. The most obvious example is abortion. St. John Paul II said sometimes evil is falsely considered a "right" that ought to be protected, which makes the matter even more serious in the eyes of God. The U.S. Bishops said we must never vote for a candidate because a candidate supports an intrinsically evil action such as abortion. To do so would be to intend to promote evil directly. Archbishop Chaput said, *"There can never be anything 'progressive' in killing an unborn child, or standing aside tolerantly while others do it. In every abortion, an innocent life always dies."* He pointed out that there are other pressing social issues, but he continued, *"trying to reason or imply them into having the same moral weight is a debasement of Christian thought."*

Ultimately, the moral litmus test for society is how we treat the weakest among us—the unborn, those with disabilities or terminal illness, and the poor or marginalized. Disrespect for any human life diminishes respect for all human life. As our nation's largest voting bloc, we Catholics can tell politicians what truly reflects one nation

under God, we can change the current culture of death to one of life, liberty, and justice for all, born and unborn.

The coin presented to Jesus in our Gospel had the image of Caesar, but He is asking us, “*Who’s image do we bear?*” God’s image is sadly lacking in our nation and is the cause of our unhappiness and unrest. For Fulton Sheen said, “*The gravest danger to American democracy ... is not from the outside; it is from the inside – the hearts of citizens in whom the light of faith has gone out. Keep God as the origin of authority and you keep the ethical character of authority; reject Him, and the authority becomes power subject to no law, except its own.*”