

30th Sunday per Annum - B
Jeremiah 31:7-9;
Hebrews 5:1-6;
Mark 10:46-52
Little Flower - 10/22/18

My Brothers and Sisters,

In just a little over a week, we will go to the polls to vote. Although we are not voting for President, this midterm election is important. Elections have consequences not just for us as individuals but also for the nation. Today, therefore, I would like to highlight a few important Catholic principles.

For Catholics and Christians, voting is both a right and a moral obligation. The Church does not have the right to tell you for whom to vote or what party to support. However, it is the obligation of the Church to help you form your conscience so that your vote reflects authentic human, Christian values.

Faithful citizenship requires us to become values voters. It requires us to look beyond our own self-interest toward the common good. According to the American bishops, “a moral test for society is how we treat the weakest among us—the unborn, those dealing with disabilities or terminal illness, the poor and marginalized.”

Catholics should not be single issue voters. On the other hand, although we are not to be single issue voters, voters **may** choose not to support a candidate on the basis of a single issue that involves intrinsic evil. Many citizens, including many Catholics, argue that the Catholic Church has been overly focused on abortion almost to the exclusion of other critical moral issues in our country. However, the Church believes that there is a hierarchy of values and that the right to life is the basis for all other rights. On the other hand, the Church also wants us to consider seriously the positions of candidates on issues involving “food and shelter, education and employment, health care and housing,” especially for the poor and most vulnerable among us.

Another critical issue to be considered when evaluating candidates is their position on religious freedom or freedom of religion. As you know, in many countries, people are persecuted or killed on the basis of their religious beliefs and practices. In our country, many want to limit freedom of religion to freedom of worship. Sometimes this means limiting or excluding the influence of religion on public life or requiring individuals or institutions to act against their faith or conscience. Freedom of religion is a much broader right than freedom of worship. At the same time, we must remember that we live in a pluralistic society.

As you prepare for election day, I want to encourage you to study the candidates’ positions on various issues, to pray over them, and finally to vote your conscience for the candidates whose beliefs and positions you believe will most advance the common good, i.e., the candidates whose positions you believe will best embody authentic human Christian values. Unfortunately, studying candidates’ positions is very difficult today because most political advertising is both extreme and negative.

My brothers and sisters, all three readings today proclaim the compassion or mercy of God. In Hebrews, the author proclaims Jesus the compassionate high priest. As Pope Francis frequently reminds us, mercy or compassion is the quality most proper to God. In the Old

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Testament, the compassion of God is seen in God's bringing the remnant of Israel home from exile. It seems to me that this passage is a metaphor for our relationship with God. No matter how separated we are from God, God always compassionately invites us to come home to him.

The compassion of God is also seen in Jesus' dramatic healing of the blind Bartimaeus. The story of Bartimaeus can also be a metaphor for us. The physical blindness of Bartimaeus is a metaphor for our spiritual blindness. Do we not often struggle to find meaning and direction in our life? Like Bartimaeus on the road, we call out, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me." Like Bartimaeus on the road, when Jesus asks us what we want him to do for us, we ask to see. Jesus heals our spiritual blindness, allowing us to then choose to follow him.