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by NCR Staff

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September 20, 2024

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Following are NCR reader responses to recent news articles, opinion columns and theological essays with letters that have been edited for length and clarity.

Pope's comments misrepresent election stakes

In the article entitled "Pope: Harris, Trump Against Life," AP journalist Nicole Winfield writes, "Pope Francis advises American Catholics to choose who they think is the 'lesser evil' in the upcoming U.S. elections." She goes on to quote Pope Francis as

saying the following: "Both are against life, be it the one who kicks out migrants, or be it the one who kills babies."

My hope is that whoever translated the Pope's words did a poor job in conveying his actual statement. The phrase, "the one who kills babies" is a shocking representation of an upstanding, moral woman (Vice President Harris) who seeks to best represent this country with all of its challenging and complicated issues; migrants and abortion being only two of many.

I am a Catholic woman. Just identifying as a woman tells you something for my standing in the Catholic Church is currently not taken very seriously by many Catholic leaders to say the least. I have three brothers-in-law who were abused by a priest. I retain my personal identity as Catholic because I have discovered the Church's teachings reside in my heart and marrow. However, I cannot sit by and remain silent.

If Pope Francis actually did say these very words in a misrepresentation of the stakes of the U.S. presidential election, shame on him! Such a harsh, judgmental and false phrase is especially shocking coming from an upstanding, moral man respected by many for his desire to make needed changes in the Catholic Church.

This is an open letter to Pope Francis and all Catholic leaders in the U.S.:

Please do not make the U.S. election a single issue election about abortion. Our entire democratic system of government is at stake with a candidate and his Republican followers who are intent on up-ending the basic principles on which this country is founded. Yes, democracy is probably the most difficult form of government we have at this time, but it is the best because its principles stand for "We the People..." and not for "I, the One In Charge Who Has All the Answers..."

JEANNE D.
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Pope's equivocation disappointing

As a Catholic who has often been edified by the general tone of Pope Francis' pontificate and encyclicals, I am extremely disappointed at his equivocation directing Catholics "to choose the lesser of two evils" in thinking about our presidential elections (ncronline.org, [Sept. 18, 2024](#)).

The Pope made a very poor judgment by equating the former President — who has based his whole identity and campaign on maligning immigrants and has stated his plans for mass arrests and the deportation of 11 million persons — with the Vice President who is not advocating abortion but instead a woman's moral agency. This is not advocating "killing children."

Harris' defense of moral agency is far different from Donald Trump's overt plans to further persecute and dehumanize an extremely vulnerable population.

I am sorely disappointed that the Pope would speak so glibly at this point in a very close election. He would've been better to simply say "No comment and I will pray for your country."

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Francis speaks for us when bishops won't

Just read Michael Sean Winter's column "Pope Francis should have ducked the question about the US election" (ncronline.org, [Sept. 18, 2024](#)). Why? The USCCB doesn't have the guts to answer the question posed to Francis. They put out their documents about 'faithful citizenship' etc., and tell us abortion is a matter of fundamental human rights, and that Catholics cannot support politicians who advocate for abortion rights. Then they tell us this does not mean Catholics should only care about the abortion issue.

The 6th Commandment is only 4 words long: Thou shalt not kill. The bishops have edited GOD's commandment to read: abortion is the preeminent priority. Unjust wars, state executions, persecution of immigrants, and any other way of taking a life get a shrug and an "ehh".

Pope Francis' answer is guidance for me: "In political morality, it is generally said that not voting is ugly, it's not good. One must vote. And one must choose the lesser evil. Which is the lesser evil? That lady or that gentleman? I don't know; each person must think and decide according to their own conscience."

I am 3 years into my 10th decade on God's good earth. I have read testimonies of those who have had abortions by choice and otherwise. The trauma those people (and their families) suffered is deeply personal. This is a subject ONLY a woman, her conscience, her family and doctor should make. The rest of us need to just mind our own damn business.

The bishops have spent millions of dollars to elect persons who oppose abortion. These millions could have done so much to help social justice and promote the "common good" they preach!

I enjoy Winter's articles and often agree with him. But Pope Francis speaks for all of us; the US bishops are mute and won't bite the hand that feeds them.

CARL TADEO

This story appears in the **Election 2024** feature series. [View the full series.](#)