Opinion

People are seen at an early voting site in Fairfax, Virginia, Sept. 18. (CNS/Reuters/Al Drago)

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It comes up in phone calls and email exchanges: "Given his support for legal abortion, can a faithful Catholic vote for Joe Biden?"

Both of us have fielded questions like that in recent weeks. Maybe you have, too.

The short answer is "Yes."

The longer answer relies on a combination of church teaching and the conscience of individual Catholics. But you might not know that to hear from some priests, politicians and prelates, not to mention other Catholic media and an occasional former college football coach.

To counter the narrative that to be Catholic means you must vote Republican and for Donald Trump, NCR has published a number of articles over the past months to educate our readers both about actual church teaching on the matter, and to provide a forum for voices of Catholics struggling with the choice this November.

As a friendly reminder — and for suggested social media sharing and forwarding to that friend from high school or great-uncle-twice-removed who insists Biden or those who vote for him are not *really* Catholic, we offer this roundup of recent helpful articles and columns.

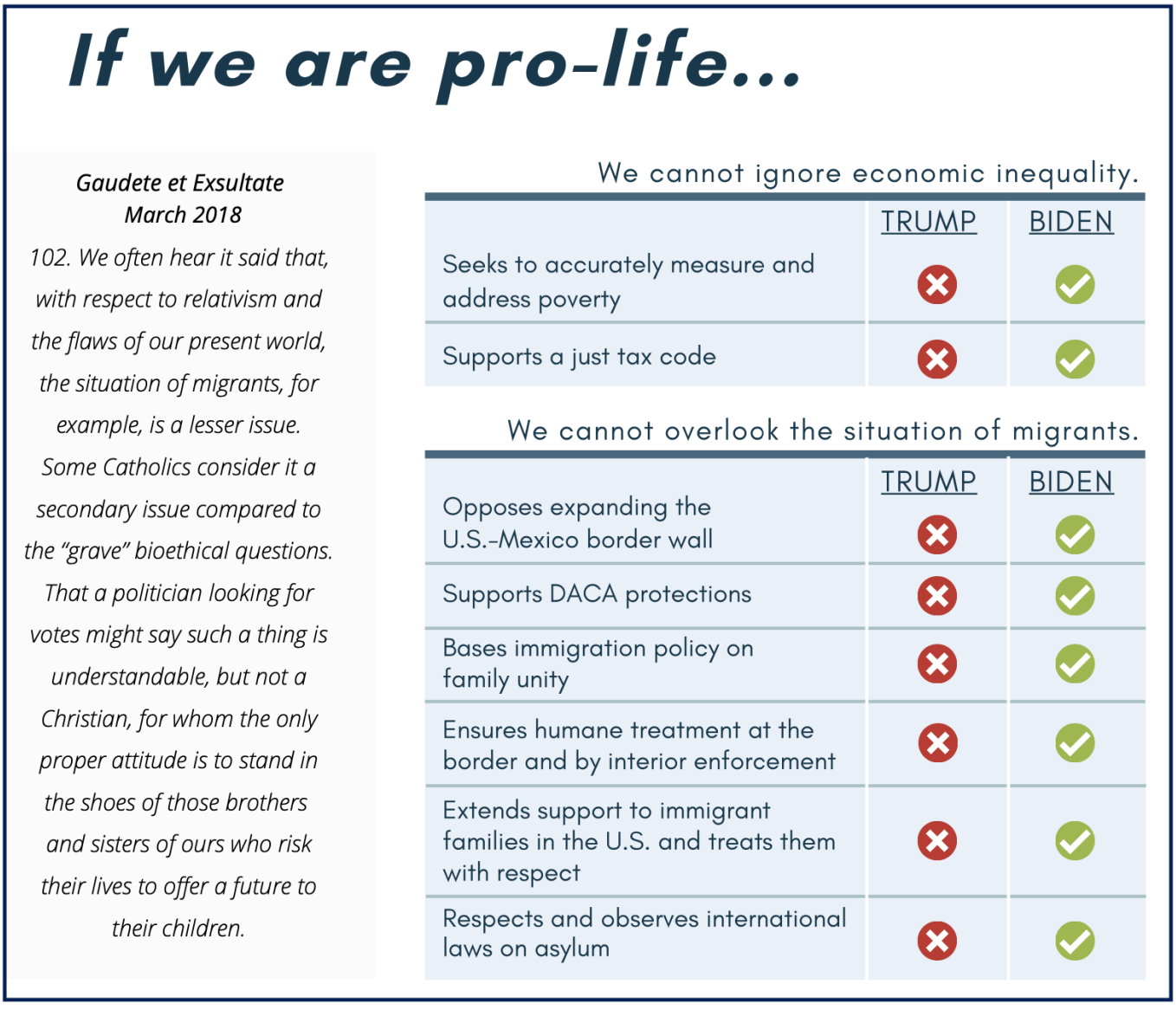
- San Diego Bishop Robert McElroy, in a virtual Oct. 13 address hosted by St. Mary's College, made it clear: "There is no single issue which in Catholic teaching constitutes a magic bullet that determines a unitary option for faith-filled voting in 2020." We have the text of the bishop's full talk, plus a news story that summarizes it, including how McElroy also decried those who question a candidate's Catholicity and noted that "in the end, it is the candidate who is on the ballot, not a specific issue."
- Conscience counts, as McElroy stressed throughout his talk. As Pope Francis wrote four years ago in his apostolic exhortation on family life, *Amoris Laetitia*, "The faithful are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations." He added, "We have been called to form consciences, not replace them."
- Character counts, especially for Catholic voters, argues Patrick Carolan, the Catholic outreach director for Vote Common Good, a group of progressive religious folks.

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- But doesn't the church teach that you can't vote for a pro-choice candidate? Catholic ethicist David DeCosse helps correct the record, by explaining the teaching — from the U.S. bishops and former Pope Benedict XVI — that voting

for a pro-choice candidate is allowed if the choice made is for other reasons the individual deems "proportionate" and "truly grave moral" ones.

- Several bishops have pushed back against single-issue voting: Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Kentucky, said that other issues, including the environment, are critical in voting, and Newark Cardinal Joseph Tobin said in a webinar: "I think that a person in good conscience could vote for Mr. Biden. I, frankly, in my own way of thinking have a more difficult time with the other option." Francis also is against one-issue voting, arguing that all life is "equally sacred" in his 2018 apostolic exhortation, Gaudete et Exsultate. Network, the Catholic social justice lobby, has been educating voters with its Equally Sacred scorecard.



Clip from Network's "Equally Sacred Priorities" voting guide (Courtesy of Network)

- Yes, a majority of U.S. bishops did vote to attach the word "preeminent" to the abortion issue in their voting guide materials for this year. But a top policy adviser to the bishops for nearly a quarter century, who has worked on that voting guide, sees racism as a "morally grave" issue as well. In an interview with NCR national correspondent Christopher White, John Carr explained why he is voting for Biden, *despite* the Democratic candidate's position on abortion.
- Carr is not the only one. We have published a number of essays by prominent Catholics who want to explain why they are "Believers for Biden." They include: child advocate Mark Kennedy Shriver, who wants a leader who will care for all Americans; former House member and ambassador Tim Roemer, who believes Biden will build on his record of reducing the number of abortions in the U.S.; and NCR columnist St. Joseph Sr. Christine Schenk, who has been inspired by the hundreds of faith leaders endorsing the Biden-Harris ticket.
- Our political columnist Michael Sean Winters has been consistent in his critique of the current administration. "No matter how many conservative judges and justices [Trump] appoints, people understand that when a man prioritizes his own image over efforts to protect the lives of others, he is not pro-life," Winters wrote in a recent column on "Why the Trump campaign is collapsing." His analysis has been ahead of the curve on a host of issues, from the significance and shape of the "Catholic vote" to the political fallout from COVID-19.
- Yet, admittedly, abortion is a sticky issue. Susan Vogt, who worked in diocesan family ministry for 25 years, describes how she approaches the issue: "Being pro-life is a messy affair during a presidential election." Theology en la Plaza columnist M.T. Dávila believes the current "hyperfocus" of the pro-life movement on making abortion illegal is problematic, in that it is obscuring the call of the common good.
- And, as polls begin to show that Trump does not have the Catholic vote locked up, sociologist Scott Liebertz analyzes the data to question the narrative that "devout" or more regular Mass-going Catholics lean Republican, in his essay, "Not so fast: The political preferences of observant Catholics may not be what you think."
- Finally, at least one bishop, David Zubik of Pittsburgh, said he cannot tell Catholics how to vote. Neither can we — at least in part because our tax-exempt, non-profit status prevents us from endorsing candidates. Instead, in our main editorial about the presidential election, we said "Catholics must vote their conscience this election." We hope this list of articles — and our entire

2020 Election feature series helps you to do just that.

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This story appears in the **Election 2020** feature series. View the full series.
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