Common sense alone dictates that single issue voting has always loomed large in politics. Issues like taxes, slavery, temperance, war and women's rights are just some of the causes that by themselves whipped up support for candidates both for and against.

This year's political fury has been so diffuse, tumultuous and scattered that no one flash point has dominated the scene. The exception might be the question of Donald Trump's sanity.

Pope Francis presumably didn't have the 2016 presidential race in mind when he told Catholics to dwell less exclusively on abortion in voicing their church's central teachings, but that hasn't prevented it from repeating the single issue of abortion in the American branch of Catholicism. The bishop of Denver explicitly made it so and others have hinted at the same thing. Among the laity, Catholic support for Trump is being justified solely on the basis that he would presumably name judges to the Supreme Court who would abolish abortion.

Now that's reaching. Trump's actual position on abortion is murky, his predilections for choosing judges completely unknown and the chances that any Supreme Court would totally turn its back on Roe v. Wade precedent are slim. Perhaps it's an effort to put a moral face on partisanship that people otherwise feel guilty about. Those who try to explain their pro-Trump sentiments publicly often make a point of allowing that he isn't exactly a campaigner for human rights, or, to put it another way, "pro-life" in his attitude toward blacks, Hispanics, etc., but that, after all, one might overlook such things for the sake of the greater good. Besides, they say in retaliatory fashion, those Clintons are worse. I think it's disingenuous, but that's my partisanship.

This is the worst case of the painful contradictions that accompany single issue voting that I can remember. Trump is so far removed from having demonstrated even a semblance of what might broadly
be considered Christian ethics that justifying his candidacy on the basis of an imagined long shot at overturning Roe v. Wade is unlike anything that has come along. The opposite view has been prevalent: Catholics may have qualms over candidates who believe in upholding a woman's right to choose but like his overall values and policies, so back them.

In my view, single issue choices can be so overwhelming as to be justifiable as a result of due diligence. Candidates will always be lacking something, or oppose what we want, and a fair degree of consistency seems essential. What troubles me now are those who profess Christian beliefs that appear to be skewed so far in single directions that are disconnected from stands on issues that correlate with them. Single issue politics isn't the same as isolated or disjointed politics. In more ways than one, the upcoming election isn't so much a plebescite on Trump as it is the conflicted makeup of the American public.

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