

Pro life policies begin with you and your vote.

Fall has arrived. School is back in session and fall sports dominate newspapers and water cooler conversations. Nights are cooler, and every TV show is interrupted with comments from our local politicians. The signal is clear. The mind numbing process of another election season is upon us. Mind numbing it is. Some of us get so tired of the rhetoric that we fail to ask the good questions, and we allow the public relation firms to win the races. We look forward to November 7th as a day of freedom from political commercials, letters to the editor, and yard signs. We get so we don't care who wins as long as we don't have to put up with any more of the political diatribe. But if we give in we lose. And what we stand to lose is far more important than the few hours we give away to the politicians stumping for our vote.

Cardinal Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles said in an address to the The National Press Club in Washington, D.C. “*a culture of violence...haunts our nation. It is reflected in our movies and music, our television and video games, in our homes, schools, and on our streets. More ominously, our society is tempted to solve some of our more significant social problems with violence. Consider this:*

- *Abortion is promoted to deal with difficult or unwanted pregnancies;*
- *Euthanasia and assisted suicide are suggested as a remedy for the burdens of age and illness;*
- *Capital punishment is marketed as the answer to deal with violent crime.*

A nation that destroys its young, abandons its elderly, and relies on vengeance is in serious moral trouble.”

This is what we have to lose.

My experience working in social justice ministries has been very enlightening. I have learned from the poor and the mentally ill, the inmates in our prisons, the homebound and those in nursing homes. I have learned that life in all these persons is precious.

But these people cannot protect themselves. If we do not stand up for them they too will be destroyed. They need to see our face and feel our touch, and they need to know we will take their voices to the places of power and work to make their lives a little bit better.

Bishop Charles J. Chaput, and Bishop Jose Gomez from Colorado in a joint statement explained our obligation this way, “*...in the November elections, each of us will face the task, in the voting booth, of building a culture of life – or it's opposite. Each of us will make that choice as an individual, but we'll bear the consequences as a community. So we need to choose well.*”

The Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, and the Diocese of Helena along with The Montana Catholic Conference have sent packets from the USCCB for the Faithful Citizenship (voter registration and get out to vote), and the Respect Life Projects. Packets went to each parish, and Catholic School in both Dioceses. These packets are filled with incredible resources and materials for voter registration and respect life projects. They also provide questions to ask which will guide us in our decision making before going to the polls.

The election season is numbing, and much too long, but Catholics need to understand the moral obligation we have to be responsible, informed voters. Our elected officials will make policy which will directly affect life issues, as well as the manner in which our society will care for the least among us. Register, become informed, and vote. Pro life policies that reflect Catholic values begin with you and your vote.

The Montana Catholic Conference has additional packets to distribute to social justice groups, and other Catholic organizations in the state. If you have questions or would like to order more materials, please contact us at 406-442-5761 or director@montanacc.org.