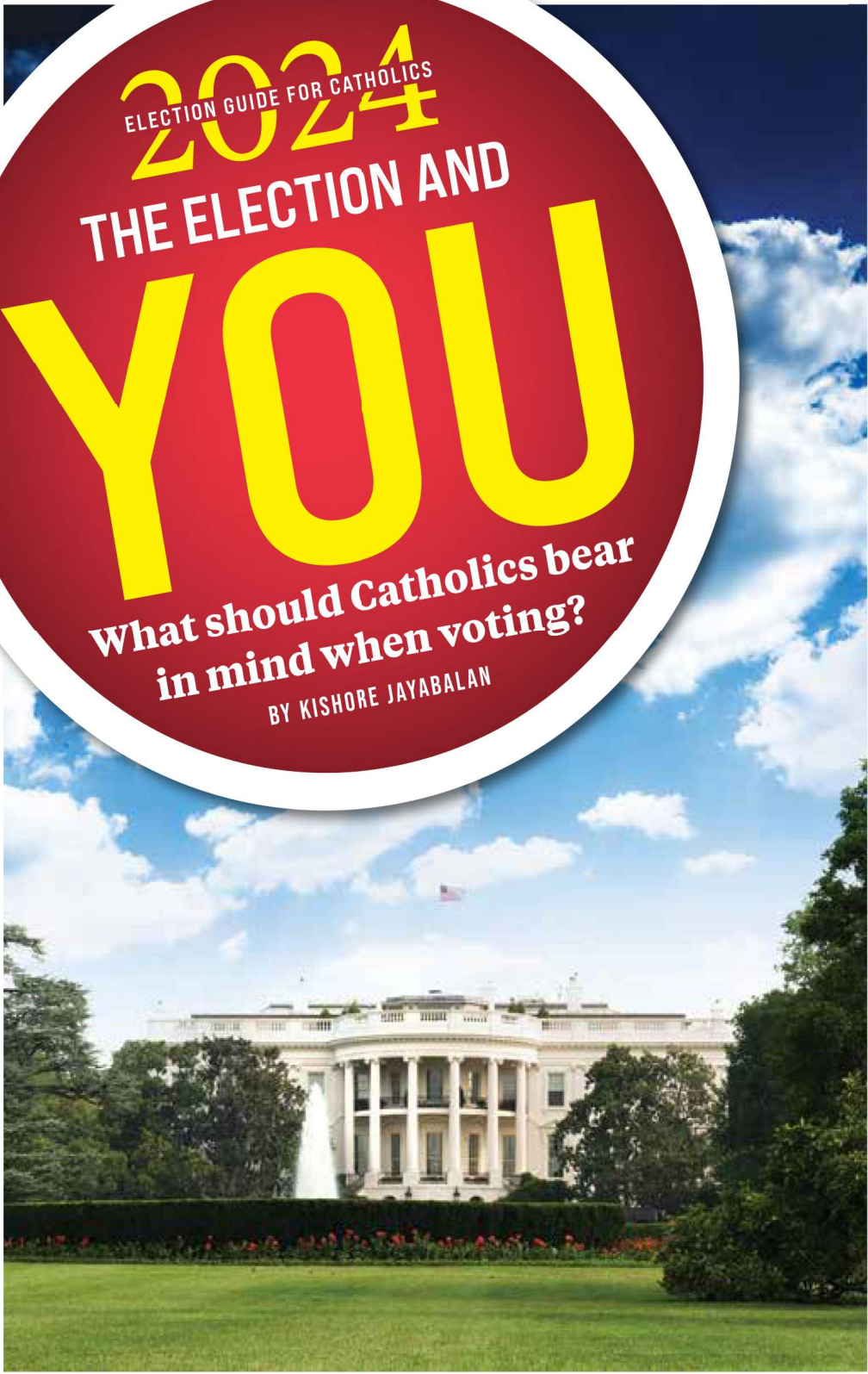


SPECIAL REPORT

2024 ELECTION GUIDE FOR CATHOLICS



2024
ELECTION GUIDE FOR CATHOLICS
THE ELECTION AND
YOU
What should Catholics bear
in mind when voting?
BY KISHORE JAYABALAN



Catholic citizens in the Diocese of Lansing have the right and duty to participate in political life. For most of us, this participation takes the form of voting for elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels of government. While the tone and tenor of the campaign season can appear overly partisan or personality-driven, we should strive to be more thoughtful and coherent, exercising both faith and reason in our voting behavior.

When considering whom to vote for, Catholics should evaluate the policy positions of the candidates from the perspective of the Church’s moral and social teachings. The four main principles of Catholic Social Teaching (CST) — human dignity, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity — are especially helpful when thinking about social issues. Taken together, these principles are the pillars of a society that reflects God’s will for the created order and the natural moral law.

The Church offers these teachings not only for individual Catholics to hold privately but also for them to be widely shared for the benefit of all. It is therefore an essential component of the Church’s evangelical mission, whereby we exercise our religious liberty and the freedom of conscience to make our voices heard in public affairs.

Our largely two-party electoral system presents voters with a choice between candidates who hold opposing views on a number of issues. While these issues vary in level of moral importance, a few of them are worthy of special attention because they concern non-negotiable ethical principles. How someone governs is more important than who governs. The ethical has primacy over the partisan and the personal.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long called the issue of **abortion** “preeminent” in our country because it involves the intentional taking of the most vulnerable human lives in the womb. It violates the principles of human dignity, the common good, and solidarity by pitting mothers against their unborn children;

and it violates subsidiarity by not assisting those most in need who cannot defend themselves. The U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* allowed each state to determine its abortion policy. Most unfortunately, voters in Michigan approved a constitutional amendment to legalize abortion later that year, and abortion advocates have since sought to remove all restrictions on this abhorrent practice. Catholics must continue the fight to defund, restrict and eventually eliminate abortion so that every life is welcomed and protected from conception to natural death.

Efforts in the Michigan Senate to legalize **physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia**, perversely labelled "death with dignity," are also grave threats to human dignity and solidarity. A society that does not value human lives because they are suffering or unproductive is anything but compassionate. The examples of people suffering from mental illnesses and simple loneliness who are being killed in the name of "mercy" is appalling. Instead, we must ensure that all people have access to affordable, quality health care at all stages of their lives.

In 2023, the state of Michigan passed a law allowing paid **surrogacy** resulting from **in-vitro fertilization** that commercializes acts of human reproduction and sexuality that God intended for marriage. While the desire to have children is natural and laudatory, children and the women who bear them must not be considered commodities to be bought and sold, which can only lead to further exploitation of the poor and



desperate. We should instead be upholding the sacred nature of **marriage** between one man and one woman and encouraging the **adoption of children into loving two-parent families**.

There are other issues of importance that allow for the more prudential or contingent application of CST and moral principles.

Thinking about the largely federal issue of **immigration** requires us to consider the dignity of migrants, the common good of the sending and receiving countries, solidarity with migrants and the working poor of one's own society, and subsidiarity when dealing with economic development and charitable activities. Balancing all these principles means taking a "both/and" rather than an "either/or" or "pro/con" approach to immigration, treating citizens and migrants as human persons, rather than mere factors of production or political interest groups.

Economic issues, ranging from the production and consumption of good and services to inflation and international trade, are often complex and multifaceted yet still affected by public policy. Most

economic decisions involve trade-offs between competing goods and are not made with absolute knowledge or power. CST has always recognized the importance of economics in providing for the material needs of society while placing it in a juridical and ethical framework. The causes of economic phenomena are often not well understood, while the effects are usually felt by everyone. A truly social approach would minimize class conflict, encourage healthy competition with forms of cooperation and care for the poor. An overly materialistic or deterministic approach to economics should be avoided, leaving room for moral and spiritual considerations.

Finally, **education** is the primary responsibility of parents to provide for their children, at home and/or at religious, private, or public institutions. The rights and duties of parents must not be neglected, nor should the lack of economic means prevent children from receiving basic quality education. Government officials have a largely subsidiary responsibility in education, leaving most decisions to parents, teachers and local school boards and assisting them when necessary.

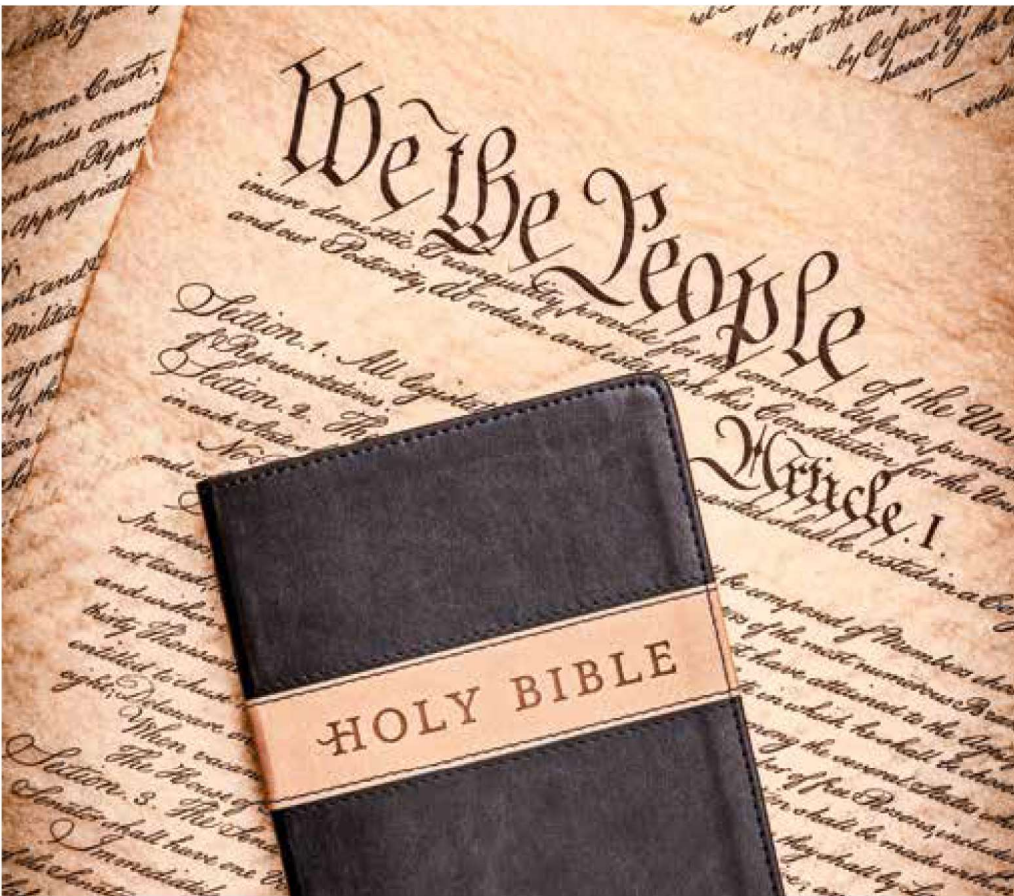
Crime is a scourge that affects all of us, especially the poor who lack the means to defend themselves or move to safer neighborhoods. Promoting stronger families and local communities can help reduce crime rates. Law enforcement officials are responsible for maintaining order and safety and should be models of justice. Our legal system needs to deter, punish, and rehabilitate criminals efficiently, which often requires greater resources. At the same time, we cannot forget God's merciful love that tempers and perfects our desire for justice.

Examining these issues through the lens of CST serves to guide the concerns of Catholic voters in the Diocese of Lansing for this election cycle. It is not exhaustive, setting aside important matters such as **foreign policy** or **gender conversion therapy**, for instance, and it cannot predict others that may arise. (We mentioned the ongoing Michigan lawsuit on gender conversion therapy in the cover story of September's magazine issue.)

Such is the nature of politics, which rarely presents easy solutions to difficult problems and requires the cardinal virtues of courage, moderation, justice and prudence from those in public life. As always, our model must be Jesus Christ himself, who came offering eternal salvation, not a political program; yet he is our eternal king who must reign in all aspects of our lives.†

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enon. It's not that the diocese has not always strongly defended the religious freedom of Catholics — it has. Rather, it's that, in recent years (and especially in the last 10 or so years since the Supreme Court's approval of so-called "gay marriage"), the culture and laws have themselves changed as our society has abandoned Christian moral values once taken for granted — values regarding marriage, abortion, contraception, sterilization, euthanasia, homosexual behavior, and, most recently, even what it means to be a man or a woman.

It was not always so. In the 1990s, with little opposition, Congress passed the Religious

Voting for Religious Liberty

BY WILLIAM R. BLOOMFIELD

AS GENERAL COUNSEL for the Diocese of Lansing, I've been making visits to parishes throughout the diocese. During these visits, one of the subjects I routinely discuss is religious liberty, encouraging our parishes, schools, and other Catholic entities to hold fast to the Catholic faith regardless of the pressures they may be facing from federal, state, or local governments, and promising to defend them should they be challenged. Bishop Boyea has himself been a leader in religious liberty, supporting several important religious liberty lawsuits in recent years. These lawsuits have protected Catholic Charities' right to run their adoption programs in conformity with Catholic teaching regarding marriage as being between one man and one woman, have challenged the state's revised civil rights law that extended protections for sexual orientation and gender identity but failed to include statutory religious liberty protections, and, most recently, have challenged the state's law mandating that counselors affirm minors who are confused regarding their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Yet truly, these religious liberty lawsuits are a new phenom-

Freedom Restoration Act, reiterating Congress' commitment to protect the free exercise of religion from being burdened by government. Yet today, rather than uniformly defending the American value of religious freedom, many politicians have chosen to side with activists, abandoning their previous support for religious liberty and dismissing religious opposition to the revolutionary sexual agenda as bigoted.

Just this year alone, federal agencies have proposed 15 new rules or draft rules advancing a radical agenda of abortion, contraception, sterilization, and gender ideology. And as bad as these rules are, they are far worse for failing to include what used to be standard religious liberty protections.

While the bishop will continue to invoke legal defenses to protect religious freedom in our Diocese, it remains vital for Catholic voters to demand that their representatives support religious protections in legislation, vote for those who do, and oppose those who do not and who advance false ideologies contrary to the teachings of the Church. †

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