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CNS documentary service

Conscience, Candidates and Discipleship in Voting

Bishop McElroy

Bishop Robert W. McElroy of San Diego, in a Feb. 6 speech at the University of San Diego, said “the drive to label a single issue pre-eminent” in the 2020 election “distorts the call to authentic discipleship in voting rather than advancing it.” Bishop McElroy called both abortion and the environment “core life issues in Catholic teaching.” He said, “The death toll from abortion is more immediate, but the long-term death toll from unchecked climate change is larger and threatens the very future of humanity.” He added, “There is no mandate in universal Catholic social

“There cannot be faith-filled Catholic voting without the virtue of prudence, exercised within the sanctity of well-formed conscience.”

teaching that gives a categorical priority to either of these issues as uniquely determinative of the common good.” Yet “the designation of either of these issues as the preeminent question in Catholic social teaching at this time in the United States,” Bishop McElroy said, “will inevitably be hijacked by partisan forces to propose that Catholics have an overriding duty to vote for candidates that espouse that position. Recent electoral history shows this to be a certainty.” A new introductory letter to the U.S. bishops’ quadrennial guidance for voters, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizens,” calls abortion the pre-eminent issue for voters. Bishop McElroy cited 10 issues he said Catholics should scrutinize. Beyond abortion and the environment, he listed immigration and refugees, euthanasia and assisted suicide, racism, work and workers’ rights, poverty and inequality, the promotion of marriage and family, nuclear disarmament and the protection of religious liberty. Bishop McElroy’s speech follows.

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis points powerfully to the vocation of faith-filled citizenship:

“An authentic faith ... always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family that dwells here, with all of its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common

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