

Is it a sin to vote for abortion backers?



Father John Dietzen

Question Corner

Q. I am thoroughly confused. Recent issues of our Catholic newspaper and magazines say that, according to some bishops, voting for a candidate who backs abortion is a sin, and we should not go to Communion. Other bishops tell us something different.

How can something be a mortal sin in one part of the country and not a sin somewhere else? It seems to me no politician's hands are clean, even on abortion. Are we expected to avoid voting altogether until we have a "perfect" candidate, which will never happen? (Maryland)

A. Catholic voters are wondering how to work their way through this. Fortunately, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops gave us some help at their June meeting.

After a brief opening statement, interim reflections from the USCCB task force on Catholics and political life were presented by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick (Washington), Archbishop William Levada (San Francisco) and Cardinal William Keeler (Baltimore). What I say here will apply their comments only to voters, not to politicians.

Your concern must be resolved on basic moral principles of cooperation with evil. In Catholic tradition, there are two kinds of such cooperation — formal and material. Archbishop Levada, quoting Pope John Paul's encyclical "The Gospel of Life" (No. 74), defines formal cooperation in this context as "a direct participation in an act against innocent human life or a sharing in the immoral intention of the person committing it." Such participation or intention is never lawful.

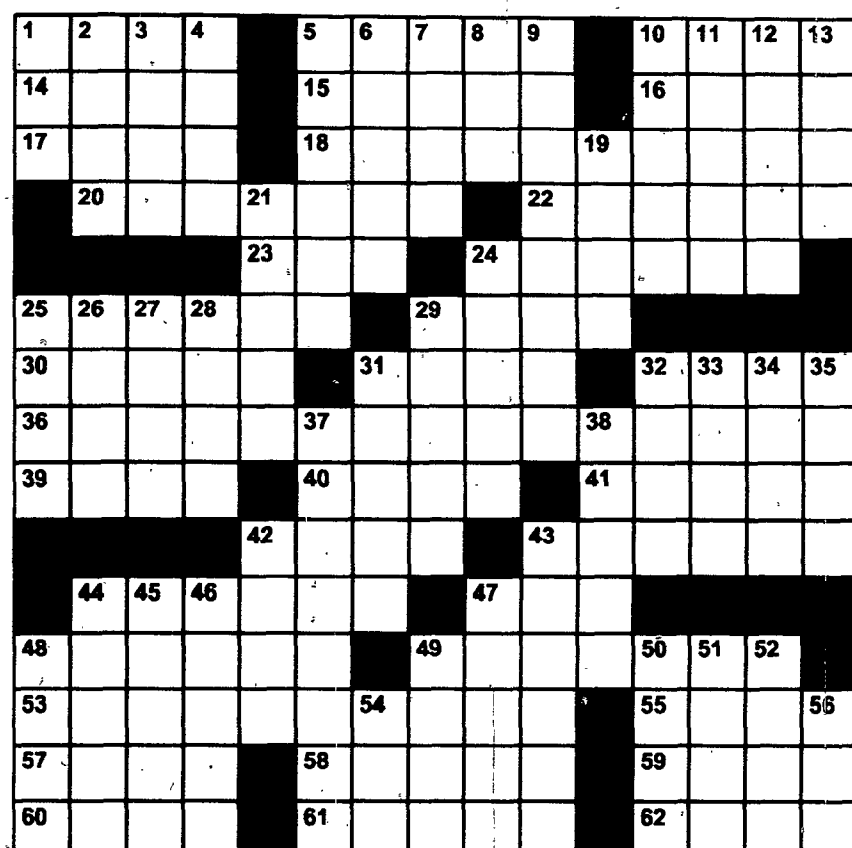
Material cooperation is an action which may abet a sinful act but does not directly participate in it, and does not concur in the evil intention

of the perpetrator. Material cooperation, therefore, is not automatically sinful, but it is lawful for a proportionate reason. (Proportionate reason would weigh factors such as the effectiveness of one's choice for achieving a desired good or avoiding an evil, and overall benefits of one option over another.)

Cardinal McCarrick, citing a letter from Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, applies that distinction to voters. A Catholic would be guilty of sinful formal cooperation in evil, he said, "only if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate's permissive stand on abortion. However, when a Catholic does not share a candidate's stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted if there are proportionate reasons."

I believe most people of good will almost intuitively use this process for making important moral distinctions and decisions.

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ACROSS

- 1 "...my ___ is easy and my burden light." (Mt 11:30)
5 Father of King David
10 Switch positions
14 Murdered by his brother in Genesis
15 Extraterrestrial
16 Ethnic description of John Paul II
17 Restaurant list
18 Immaculate ___
20 Scoops of whipped cream, for example
22 Jesus was ___ on the third day
23 First patriarch, to his friends?
24 Expels
25 Charges too much for tickets
29 Small nail
30 Sea eagles
31 Joseph had one of many colors
32 Emperor of Russia
36 Religious vocation
39 Poetic contraction
40 Air (prefix)
41 Beyond what is usual
42 "For our sake, he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, ___."
43 "...in David's city a ___ has been born..." (Lk 2:11)
44 Subordinate ruler
47 Patron saint of Ireland, familiarly

- 48 Head of a diocese
49 Tibetan breed of small dog
53 Responsorial (as a psalm)
55 Holy ___, blessed by a bishop at the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday
57 City in NW France
58 "___ by any other name would smell as sweet."
59 Monastery inhabitant
60 Catholic actor, ___ Douglas
61 Cut the limb
62 ___ B'rith

DOWN

- 1 Sweet potato
2 Father of Jesse, grandfather of King David
3 Game of chance
4 12th month of the Jewish calendar
5 ___ Ladder
6 Run away to marry
7 Venial and mortal
8 Part of a min.
9 Weaken
10 Pertaining to the eye
11 Force upon (with "on")
12 Sheets of floating ice
13 "...voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I ___?' (Is 6:8)
19 Discharged a debt
21 Pass into disuse
24 Muse of lyric poetry
25 Denomination
26 Black bird
27 With Simeon, she recognized the baby Jesus at the Temple as the savior in Luke's Gospel
28 To a smaller extent
29 Flat slab of wood
31 Move slowly
32 LX + CV
33 Type of pasta
34 Hairstyle
35 The back of
37 High priest at the time of Jesus' crucifixion
38 A saint's feast day is the day of his or her

Answers on page B3 (No. 43)

Kids' Chronicle Answers from page B16

1. Abba, 2. Bible, 3. Crucifixion, 4. David, 5. Esther
6. Goliath, 7. Isaac, 8. Philippines



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