

# Scrupulous ANONYMOUS

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## Considerations for Voting

by *Thomas M. Santa, CSSR*

Soon we'll once again have the opportunity to go to the polls. Not all people have this freedom, and it's a great blessing to participate in the democratic process.

For scrupulous people, voting can cause anxiety and stress. Most decisions are difficult, but decisions with far-reaching consequences present a unique challenge.

In this issue of SA, I'm not going to tell you whom to vote for. I will tell you how to make the process less stressful.

### The perfect candidate

No one candidate will ever perfectly represent all of your values and concerns. Unless you know the candidate personally, you'll have to base your decision on how he or she is marketed. You can't possibly know everything about the candidate, so after the election you may be surprised when he or she makes a decision you don't agree with.

People with scrupulosity must realize that despite their best efforts, someone they vote for may later disappoint them. This is not sinful. We're not mor-

ally responsible if our candidate makes a choice we don't support or that we find offensive.

### All good or all bad

Political parties often present their candidate as "good" and their opponent as "bad." Remember that things are seldom as simple or as black and white as they're presented, so try to move beyond initial reactions and first impressions.

### One-issue voting

When we vote on a specific issue in which the question is clearly defined between points A and B, it's not difficult to decide which way to vote. However, most other choices

involve more than one issue, so your choice usually cannot easily be made based on only one issue.

But candidates often try to convince voters who feel particularly passionate and committed to a specific issue to cast their vote based solely on that issue. Making a choice in this way can be appealing because it's easy. However, once elected, each candidate faces a host of issues in addition to the

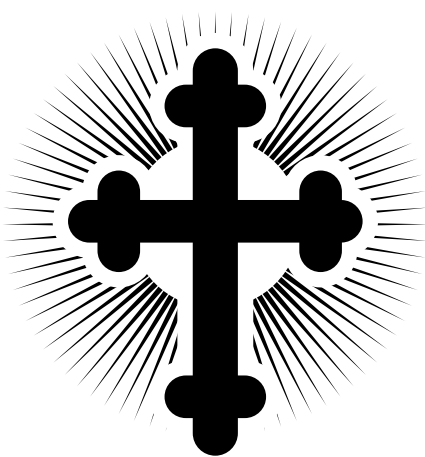


one you consider important. One-issue voters must determine whether a candidate's position on the one issue they care about will translate into positive decisions about other issues.

One-issue voting is even more appealing to people with scrupulosity than it is to the rest of the population, especially if the issue they're concerned with involves a personal struggle. But one-issue voting is putting all your eggs in one basket. On the emotional plus side, you feel a great sense of satisfaction if your candidate wins. On the other hand, if your candidate loses, you may feel loss and disappointment.

### Hot-button issues

Moral issues are often labeled as core issues by the press. Current hot-button issues include abortion, the death penalty, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, homeland security, immigration, and religious freedom. These issues engage people in vigorous and heated conversation and debate, which can lead to judgments and opinions about others based on their point of view.



I'm often asked whether it's necessary for a person to challenge or correct another person's opinion on these issues, especially if the person holding the opinion is a family member or close friend. My answer, of course, is a strongly worded caution to proceed with care—if you proceed at all. The consistent advice of the priest directors of Scrupulous Anonymous over the years has been to *avoid the impulse to correct and admonish others, even when you're sure they're wrong.*

This isn't about avoiding responsibility or giving scandal. It has to do with prudence, discipline for the sake of the kingdom, and trust in God's will being accomplished through grace.

### What does the Church teach?

The church has very clear and unambiguous teachings about every conceivable moral action or decision that affects human beings. For example, the Church defends and promotes life from the moment of conception, speaks of the dignity of the human person in every time and place, and counsels respect and love of all human persons.

Church teaching should be referenced in our discernment process of choosing a candidate; indeed, Church teachings and interpretations of the moral law can be quite helpful.

That being said, the Church does not promote the candidacy of one person over another. Individual Church leaders may have an opinion and a preference—they may even express that preference—but it is a *preference* and not an official teaching or endorsement.

The right to vote is a wonderful blessing we should never take for granted and should use with the greatest respect. May God bless us as we make decisions and cast votes we believe will contribute to the well-being of all of God's people.

# The Kingdom Is Forgiveness

The following is adapted from *With Hearts Full of Joy*  
by Mathew J. Kessler, CSsR, and José Antonio Medina, STD (Liguori Publications, © 2010).

**E**arly in the Gospels, Jesus says people who hear the Good News must repent and believe in this Good News, which is a gift. The question is, when and why does a person say yes to this gift?

The Gospels, especially Matthew, Mark, and Luke, narrate the struggle people go through when confronted with the need to convert: Zacchaeus, the woman caught in adultery, and the Samaritan woman, for example. Some feel guilt; others feel shame. When they meet Jesus, they acknowledge who they are and what they've done.

Often those most in need of the gift keep Jesus at a distance. Many souls have traveled this path. When they learn God forgives them no matter their transgression, they feel liberated and free to move forward. Peace is the gift that settles on one's soul when wrongs have been righted.

The kingdom of God comes as Good News when a sinner understands that his or her life is under God's control. God makes a final judgment about the value of a person's life. The kingdom manifests itself when people—regardless of their circumstances—are free to choose, like the Roman centurion who confesses his faith in Jesus in spite of his being subordinate to the Roman

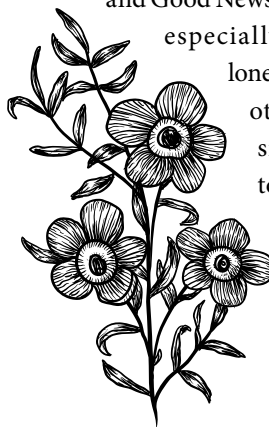
emperor, and like the poor widow who puts her coins in the temple box. Free to be who they are and express what's most pressing to them, they find new life in asking and giving. Jesus brings the Good News to those who have lived and heard the bad news of life: suffering, poverty, loneliness, death of a loved one, or abuse.

The biblical understanding of sin missed the mark. Just as an arrow shot at a target can veer off and miss, so too can we become distorted or corrupt and act and talk in inappropriate ways. We don't act in a way that promotes the good, and a relationship is broken.

The way through this is found in asking the Lord, and at times the people we've offended, for forgiveness. The kingdom is forgiveness

and Good News in *all* circumstances, especially those of poverty,

loneliness, abuse, or some other form of oppression. We might have to expose ourselves to greater harm, but the reward is also greater—a lasting peace, a peace only God can give.





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# MAILBOX

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**Q** *Is there any way to know for certain whether a decision is correct? How can I be absolutely confident that I'm following God's way and God's law at all times?*

**A** We can make a decision based only on the events and circumstances known to us. No one person has control over the unknown and the unseen. However, if you make a decision with a generous heart and spirit, you can be confident that it pleases God and that God will give you the grace to fulfill his will. That's about as close to absolute confidence a human being can get—in this life.

**Q** *Am I required to make the biblical tithe of my earthly possessions? A friend of mine insists that this is required by God and that I'm in grave sin if I don't do it.*

**A** No, you're not required to tithe according to the many prescriptions of the Old Testament. You are invited by God to incorporate a sense of stewardship (time, talent, and treasure) into your life, making judicious use of the many gifts and blessings the Lord has given you. Your generous response depends on all of your responsibilities and an honest appraisal of your obligations.



2012 Scrupulous Anonymous Retreats Presented by Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

**Friday, Oct. 26 – Sunday, Oct. 28**

Redemptorist Renewal Center, Tucson, AZ  
For information, call 520-744-3400 or visit  
[desertrenewal.org](http://desertrenewal.org) and click on RRC Calendar



**Friday, Dec. 7 – Sunday, Dec. 9**

Perpetual Help Retreat Center, Oconomowoc, WI  
For information, call 262-567-6900

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