

How nonpartisan is the coming election?

Pat Perriello | Aug. 3, 2012 NCR Today

What can and should we expect from our churches as we approach the 2012 election? Most of us do not expect our clergypersons to tell us who to vote for. Yet we also believe that the Church has a right to make its voice heard on what could be considered moral issues.

This is an important question because both candidates are going after the religious vote.

[This article from Religion News Service](#) [1] discusses the Romney campaign's efforts to target Catholic voters.

Romney has put together an outreach team for Catholics that includes several former ambassadors to the Vatican. The other interesting item in the article is that according to a Gallup Poll, the Catholic vote is currently split between Obama and Romney, with each candidate garnering about 46 percent of the vote.

That poll number may also be reflective of the ideological split that exists within the Church today.

There is no question that individual Catholics can and should participate in political campaigns as they see fit. Representatives of the institutional church, however, ought to refrain from coercion, intimidation, and even suggestions that their parishioners should cast their vote for a particular candidate.

Any inference that someone is not a good Catholic or Christian if they vote for a certain individual is totally inappropriate. Yet we are seeing indications of this. One example in Maryland is the tables set up in our parishes asking parishioners to sign petitions against the same-sex marriage law. Such activity inside churches appears inappropriate.

The difficulty in the Catholic church seems to be those hung up on one issue politics. At a time when the economic direction of our country and whether our vision for the future includes any continuing care for those in need seems the central campaign issue, a focus on issues like abortion and contraception might be misplaced.

For the most part, these are not even issues that are directly impacted at the federal level.

What do you think? What are you seeing in your parishes?

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Links:

[1] <http://www.religionnews.com/politics/election/romney-unveils-leaders-of-catholic-outreach-team1>