

A Note from Fr. Sparks, Approved by Fr. Chuck, in response to priests preaching politics in their homily



There is a recent video of a Sunday homily from the Cathedral in Phoenix, AZ that has gone “viral.” In it the preacher (without mentioning Jesus, the Scriptures, or Christianity) does a carefully worded, somewhat tortured political argument that no Catholic can in any way, shape, or form vote Democratic or for Hillary Clinton. Conservative Catholics who are pro-Trump have been forwarding this video all over the place, assuring the new viewer that this is somehow THE official, one & only Catholic interpretation.

While I am in no way advocating voting for the Democrats...or the Libertarians or the Green Party or the Republicans...I do believe strongly that this well-intentioned AZ priest has overstepped his boundaries and is doing his parishioners a great disservice. If he were to hold a weeknight parish event entitled “Fr. _____ Shares His Personal Faith Views About Election 2016,” that would be understandable, though perhaps not a wise thing to do. People could attend or not at their will. But to take over the homily spot at a Sunday Mass, where folks are attending by obligation and silenced by mandatory custom, is wrong. To do so without reference to the Scriptures of that day at all is not what the Church calls a “homily.” It may be a sermon, but feels to me more like a well-intentioned personal harangue or venting of one’s spleen.

According to our long-standing U.S. Catholic interpretation of the “separation of Church and State” as well as because of our tax-exempt status as a religious institution, we believe that the Church, dioceses, parishes, individual clergy and church employees should NOT from the pulpit or in parish publications endorse or campaign for particular candidates or political parties. Every four years the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops puts out a document outlining some of the political issues that we have strong opinions about (e.g., pro-life in all its manifestations). This is intended to help Catholics in their own personal conscience formation.

So I invite you to check out our parish website at www.staustin.org/vote for links to three resources (one from the U.S. Bishops and two from the Paulists) to assist you in your own prayerful conscience discernment. Personal election freedom, yes! Church or clerical endorsement, no!