



From the Pastor of St. Michael's Church, New York, NY
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by Fr. George W. Rutler

Exactly eight years ago I wrote a column titled "The One We Were Waiting For" in which I referred to a book by Monsignor Robert Hugh Benson, *The Lord of the World*. That dystopian novel has been cited by Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis said he has read it several times. The protagonist, if one can apply that term to an Anti-Christ, imposed a new world religion with Man himself as god. His one foe was Christianity, which he thwarted in part by using "compromised Catholics and compliant priests to persuade timid Catholics."

Since then, that program has been realized in our time, to an extent beyond the warnings of the most dire pessimists. Our federal government has intimidated religious orders and churches, challenging religious freedom. The institution of the family has been re-defined, and sexual identity has been Gnosticized to the point of mocking biology. Assisted suicide is spreading, abortions since 1973 have reached a total equal to the population of Italy, and sexually transmitted diseases are at a record high. Objective journalism has died, justice has been corrupted, racial bitterness ruins cities, entertainment is degraded, knowledge of the liberal arts spirals downwards, and authentically Catholic universities have all but vanished. A weak and confused foreign policy has encouraged aggressor nations and terrorism, while metastasized immigration is destroying remnant western cultures, and genocide is slaughtering Christian populations. The cynical promise of economic prosperity is mocked by the lowest rate of labor participation in forty years, an unprecedented number of people on food stamps and welfare assistance, and the largest disparity in wealth in over a century.

In his own grim days, Saint Augustine warned against nostalgia: "The past times that you think were good, are good because they are not yours here and now." The present time, however, might try even his confidence. Sands blow over the ruins of churches he knew in North Africa where the Cross is virtually forbidden. By a blessed irony, a new church is opened every day in formerly Communist Russia, while churches in our own formerly Christian nation are being closed daily. For those who bought into the seductions of politicians' false hopes, there is the counsel of Walt Kelly's character Pogo: "It's always darkest before it goes pitch black."

It is incorrect to say that the coming election poses a choice between two evils. For ethical and aesthetic reasons, there may be some bad in certain candidates, but badness consists in doing bad things. Evil is different: it is the deliberate destruction of truth, virtue and holiness.

Con't on reverse

While one may pragmatically vote for a flawed candidate, one may not vote for anyone who advocates and enables unmitigatedly evil acts, and that includes abortion. "In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to 'take part in a propaganda campaign in favor of such a law, or vote for it'" (Evangelium Vitae, 73).

At one party's convention, the name of God was excluded from its platform and a woman who boasted of having aborted her child was applauded. It is a grave sin, requiring sacramental confession and penance, to become an accomplice in objective evil by voting for anyone who encourages it, for that imperils the nation and destroys the soul.

It is also the duty of the clergy to make this clear and not to shrink, under the pretense of charity, from explaining the Church's censures. Wolves in sheep's clothing are dangerous, but worse are wolves in shepherd's clothing. While the evils foreseen eight years ago were realized, worse would come if those affronts to human dignity were endorsed again. In the most adverse prospect, God forbid, there might not be another free election, and soon Catholics would arrive at shuttered churches and vacant altars. The illusion of indifference cannot long be perpetuated by lame jokes and synthetic laughter at banquets, for there is handwriting on the wall.