Clear Conscience: A Catholic Guide to Voting identifies the responsibilities of Catholics to our Faith and country as we make voting decisions. Its comprehensive guidance helps Catholics navigate the most important issues facing our nation. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution affirm our legal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. But the interpretation of these truths today varies widely across the fascinating tapestry of America. Our freedoms as citizens in a democracy are both a wonderful privilege and a lofty responsibility. As the political climate grows more confusing, where do we as Catholics stand?

Clear Conscience will offer you insights into:

- The rights of every person, and our responsibility to defend those rights
- Specific political issues, and what the Church says about them
- How Catholic tradition has contributed to a free and just society

This book will not tell you who to vote for—that is a decision only you can make—but it will give you the guidance you need to vote with a clear conscience.
I’m not sure I even knew what the word *jurisprudence* meant as I sat in my first class with Professor Charlie Rice at Notre Dame. If I did, I know I didn’t understand it.

Today, I look back on that class and still draw much inner strength from it. At a critical time in my life, it set my moral compass. I still see Professor Rice in my mind’s eye: chiseled facial features, Marine hair-cut, standing strong and exhibiting an unusual degree of inner confidence and peace. Professor Charlie Rice was larger than life.

The most important lesson I learned from him was the first precept of natural law: “Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided.”

This book seeks to help each of us seek good and avoid evil.

It is timely. The world seems to be coming apart at the seams—COVID-19, racial unrest, economic uncertainty, all under a growing loss of faith. Domestically, we are blessed to live in the greatest and most free nation on earth. And yet everything is politicized, and hurtful exchanges of words pit friends, colleagues, and brothers and sisters against one another.

Perhaps, there has never been a more critical time in our lives to exercise our political freedom to vote; but perhaps there has also never been a more confusing period.
The stakes are high—the future of our children and our children’s children.

So how do we vote? Is there a way to rationally measure the issues and candidates to ensure that we really are seeking good and avoiding evil?

*Clear Conscience: A Catholic Guide to Voting* helps us answer those important questions and guides us as we approach local, state, and national elections. It begins with a primer on the meaning of politics and the law. It draws on Scripture, natural law, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and papal teachings, such as the words of St. John Paul II. It not only provides a foundation for us to stand on as we cast our ballots—that is, a foundation that brings our faith, our patriotism, our morals, and our sense of fairness and justice together; it also builds on that foundation to provide specific guidance on contemporary issues, bridging our will to do good with the best policies to accomplish it.

This book helps us navigate the most contentious, confusing, and perilous issues of the day, such as the erosion of patriotism and the nuclear family. It analyzes and provides concrete guidance to issues such as immigration, poverty, guns, and the environment. And of course, it provides the principles that undergird our Catholic Faith’s non-negotiable position on life issues.

What this book does not do is tell you who to vote for or against, and what issues and policies you should or should not support. Indeed, my favorite chapter is Chapter Eight, “Prudential Judgment.” It starts off with the imperative that Catholics can never promote anything that violates the inherent dignity of the human person—and then quickly moves to the theme of the chapter—that the Church “leaves the majority of policy questions up to our sound judgment.”

If, as I suspect, you thirst for authenticity and congruency and sacredness in your life, how you vote plays a significant
role in fulfilling that quest. As faithful Catholics, we have a duty to exercise our right to vote in ways that harmonize faith and reason. We have a responsibility to our families and the future of our country to seek good and avoid evil. This book will help you tremendously in that endeavor.

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