

Policy v Principle

We Christians cannot differ on our moral obligation to help build a more just and peaceful world through morally acceptable means, so that the weak and vulnerable are protected and human rights and dignity are defended, but we may choose different ways to respond to compelling social problems.

Various Ways & Means

- Health care (government v privatized)
- Poverty (social assistance state v subsidiarity)
- Education (public education v school choice)
- War (unjust v just)
- Death Penalty (discouraged v possibility)
- Equality (affirmative action v merit-based hiring)
- Etc.

Example: Immigration A

“The more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin. Public authorities should see to it that the natural right is respected that places a guest under the protection of those who receive him.”

From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
2241

Example: Immigration B

“Political authorities, for the sake of the common good for which they are responsible, may make the exercise of the right to immigrate subject to various juridical conditions, especially with regard to the immigrants' duties toward their country of adoption. Immigrants are obliged to respect with gratitude the material and spiritual heritage of the country that receives them, to obey its laws and to assist in carrying civic burdens.”

From *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
2241

Moral Weight

“Not all moral issues have the same moral weight ... For example, if a Catholic were to be at odds with the Holy Father on the application of capital punishment or on the decision to wage war, he would not for that reason be considered unworthy to present himself to receive Holy Communion...”

From Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion – General Principles*, 2004, 3.

“...While the Church exhorts civil authorities to seek peace, not war, and to exercise discretion and mercy in imposing punishment on criminals, it may still be permissible to take up arms to repel an aggressor or to have recourse to capital punishment. There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty...”

From Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion – General Principles*, 2004, 3.

“Grey” Matters

- There is complexity within most issues
- Church knowledge grows with scientific advances
- Reasonable people can desire the same noble ends and share the same goodly principles but may utilize alternate, even mutually exclusive, policies or means to achieve them.

Mark 14:7

“For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me.”

Intrinsically Evil Acts

But there are some issues that do not admit of grey or nuance; they are always and everywhere wrong. These are known as intrinsically evil acts and they are always incompatible with love of God and neighbor.

Single Issue Voters?

“As Catholics we are not single-issue voters. A candidate’s position on a single issue is not sufficient to guarantee a voter’s support. Yet a candidate’s position on a single issue that involves an intrinsic evil, such as support for legal abortion or the promotion of racism, may legitimately lead a voter to disqualify a candidate from receiving support.”

From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, 2007, 42.

Non-Negotiable Principles

“As far as the Catholic Church is concerned, the principal focus of her interventions in the public arena is the protection and promotion of the dignity of the person, and she is thereby consciously drawing particular attention to principles which are not negotiable.”

From Pope Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the European People's Party on the Occasion of the Study Days on Europe, 2006.*

Among these the following emerge clearly today:

- protection of life in all its stages, from the first moment of conception until natural death;
- recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family — as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage — and its defense from attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different forms of union which in reality harm it and contribute to its destabilization, obscuring its particular character and its irreplaceable social role;

- the protection of the right of parents to educate their children.

These principles are not truths of faith, even though they receive further light and confirmation from faith; they are inscribed in human nature itself and therefore they are common to all humanity.”

From Pope Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the European People's Party on the Occasion of the Study Days on Europe, 2006.*

Non-Negotiable Evils

- “Abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental human good and the condition for all others” --*Living the Gospel of Life*, no. 5
- Human Cloning
- Embryo-Destructive Research
- Matrimony Defined in Any Other Way Except Between One Man and One Woman
- Attacks Against the Rights of Parents to Educate Their Children.

Not All Moral Issues Are Equal

“Two temptations in public life can distort the Church's defense of human life and dignity: The first is a moral equivalence that makes no ethical distinctions between different kinds of issues involving human life and dignity. The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed.”

From Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, 2007.

Look at All the Issues

“The second is the misuse of these necessary moral distinctions as a way of dismissing or ignoring other serious threats to human life and dignity.”

From Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States, 2007.

“Opposition to abortion and euthanasia does not excuse indifference to those who suffer from poverty, violence and injustice... But being 'right' in such matters can never excuse a wrong choice regarding direct attacks on innocent human life.”

From the U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to American Catholics*, 1998.

Right to Life is Foundational

"It is impossible to further the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life, upon which all the other inalienable rights of individuals are founded and from which they develop."

From Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*

Maximum Determination

“Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights—for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture—is false and illusory if *the right to life*, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.”

From Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, no. 38.

Issue Hierarchy

“Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia... There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not however with regard to abortion and euthanasia.”

From Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion – General Principles*, 2004, §3.

“It is the rare candidate who will agree with the Church on every issue. But as the U.S. Bishops’ recent document Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship makes clear, not every issue is of equal moral gravity. The inalienable right to life of every innocent human person outweighs other concerns where Catholics may use prudential judgment, such as how best to meet the needs of the poor or to increase access to health care for all.”

From New York State Catholic Conference, *Our Cherished Right, Our Solemn Duty*, 2008.

“The right to life is the right through which all others flow. To the extent candidates reject this fundamental right by supporting an objective evil, such as legal abortion, euthanasia or embryonic stem cell research, Catholics should consider them less acceptable for public office. As Faithful Citizenship teaches, “Those who knowingly, willingly, and directly support public policies or legislation that undermine fundamental moral principles cooperate with evil.”

From New York State Catholic Conference, *Our Cherished Right, Our Solemn Duty*, 2008.

Moral Dilemma

“When all candidates hold a position in favor of an intrinsic evil, the conscientious voter faces a dilemma. The voter may decide to take the extraordinary step of not voting for any candidate or, after careful deliberation, may decide to vote for the candidate deemed less likely to advance such a morally flawed position and more likely to pursue other authentic human goods.”

From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, 2007, 36.

Cannot Vote for Abortion

“A Catholic would be guilty of formal cooperation in evil, and so unworthy to present himself for Holy Communion, if he were to deliberately vote for a candidate precisely because of the candidate’s permissive stand on abortion and/or euthanasia.”

From *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion – General Principles* by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, N.B.

Proportionate Reasons

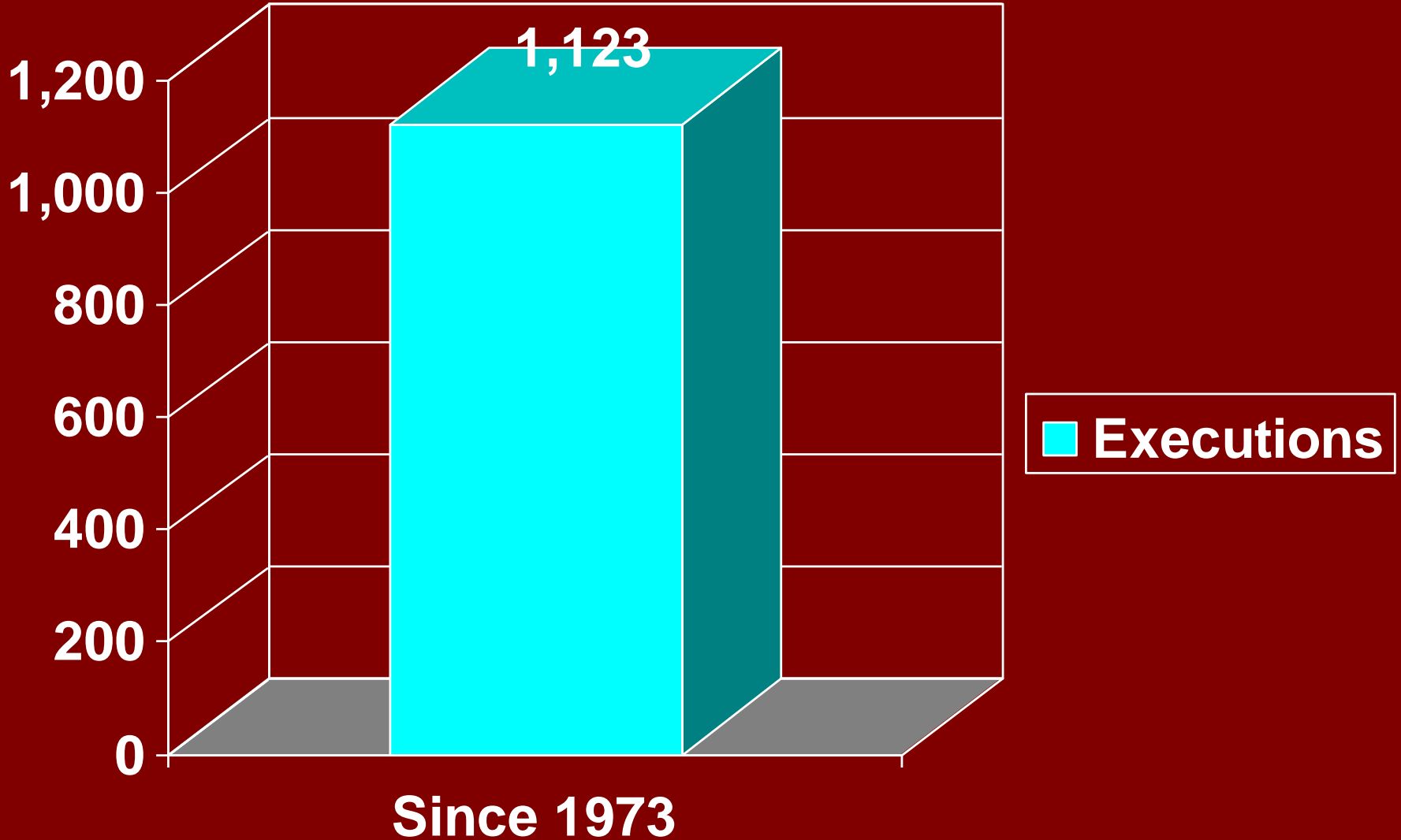
“When a Catholic does not share a candidate’s stand in favor of abortion and/or euthanasia, but votes for that candidate for other reasons, it is considered remote material cooperation, which can be permitted in the presence of proportionate reasons.”

From *Worthiness to Receive Holy Communion – General Principles* by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, N.B.

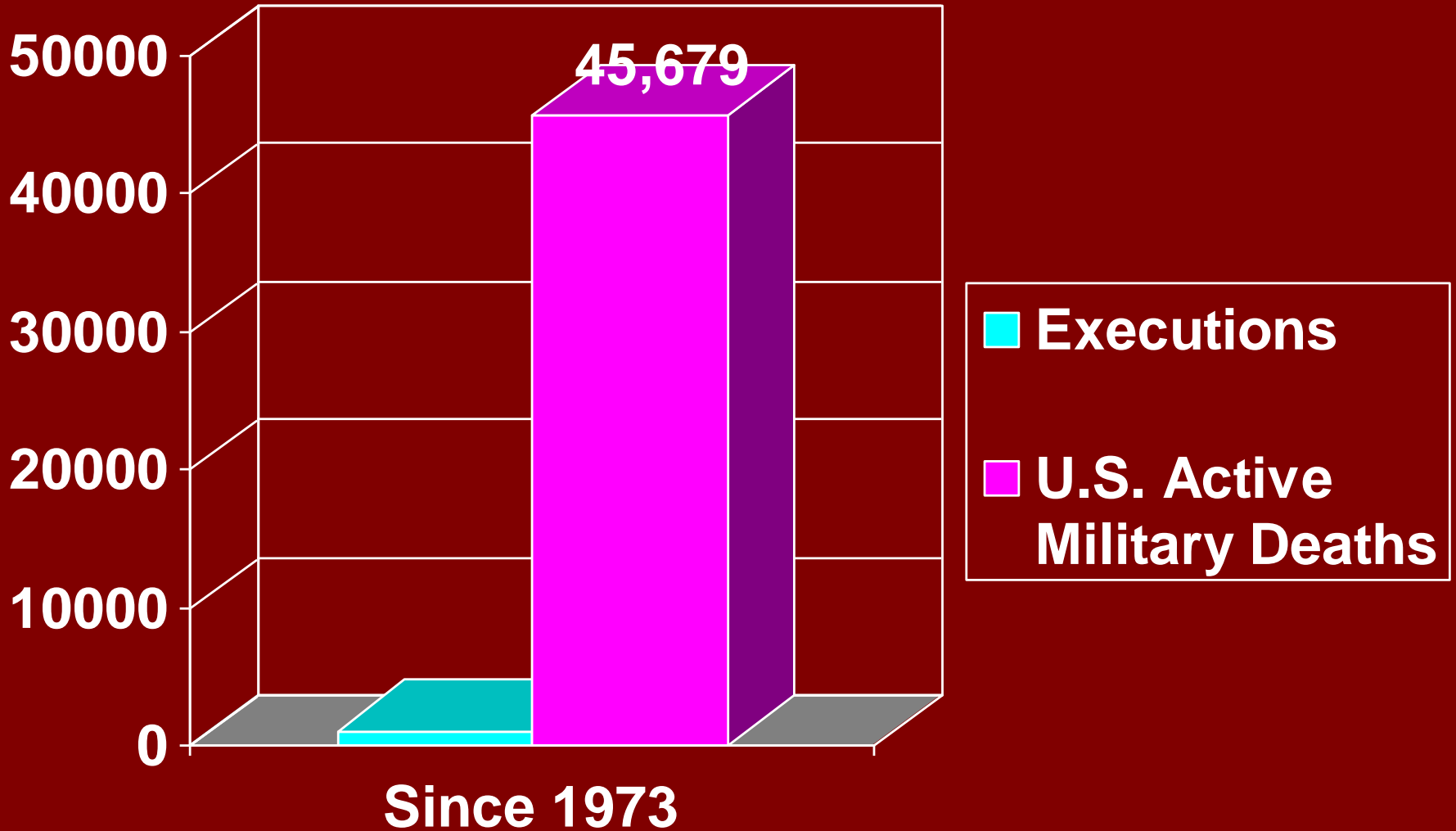
Proportional Attributes

1. Quantity of Evil

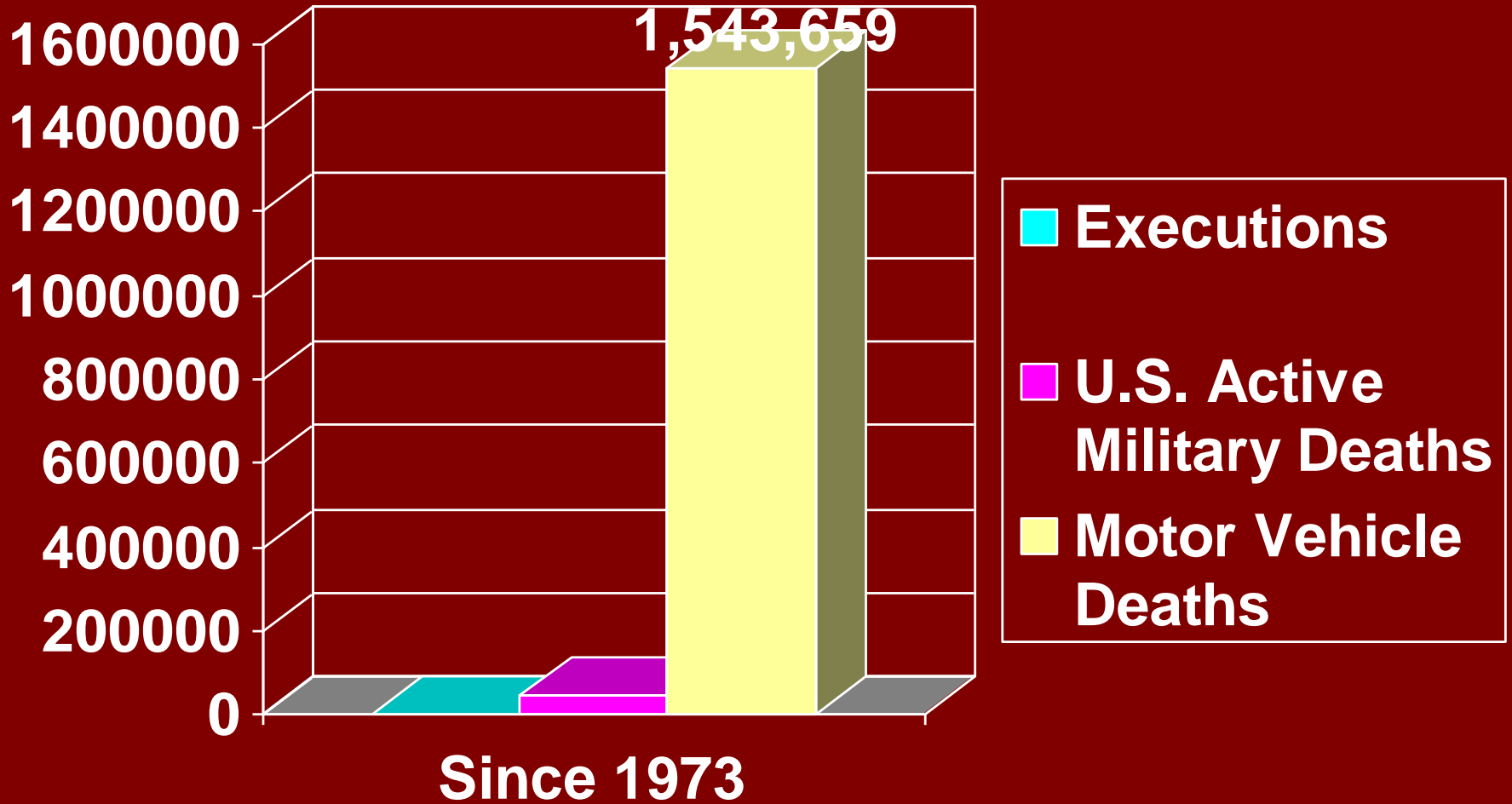
United States



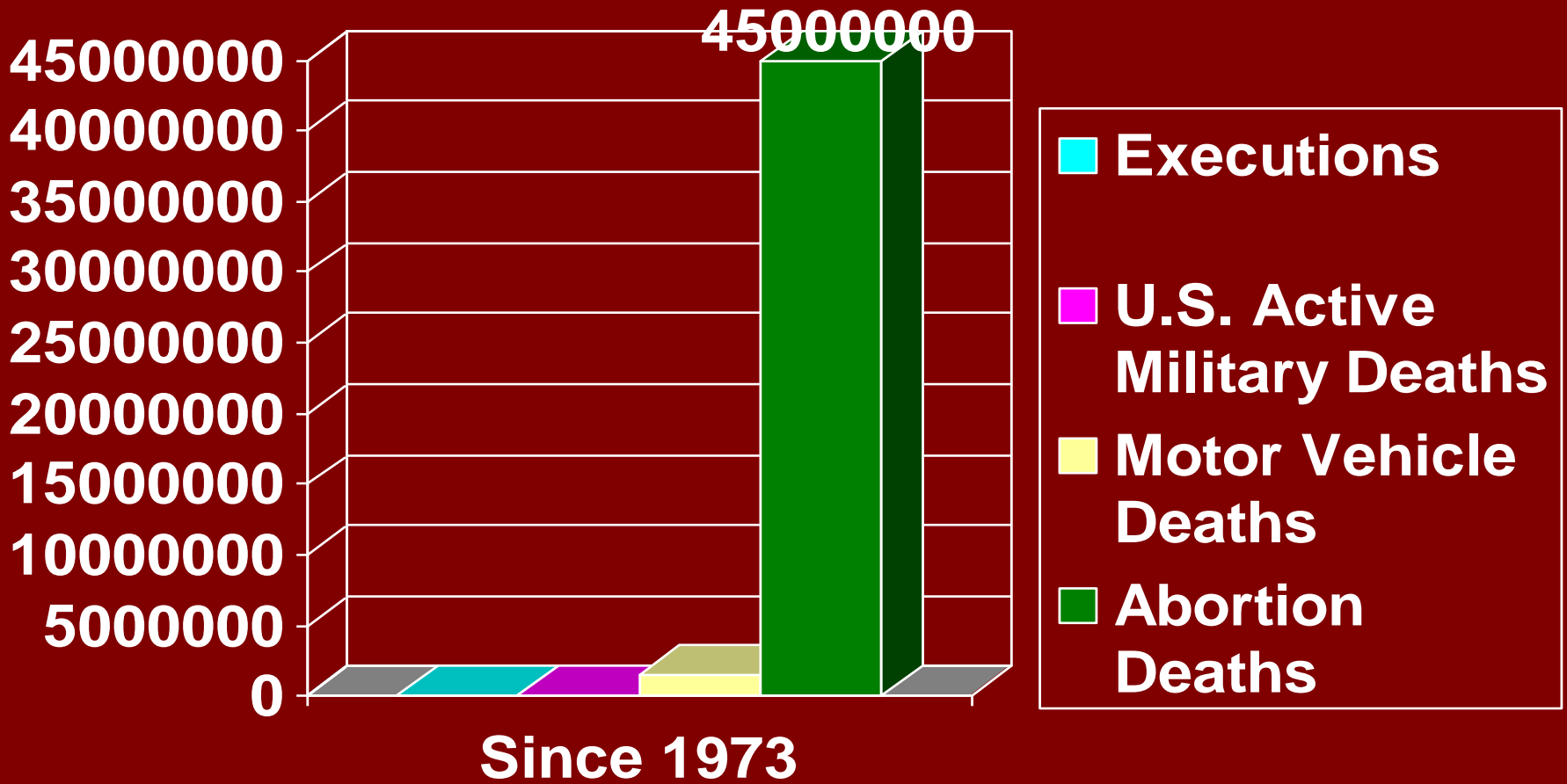
United States



United States



United States



Proportional Attributes

2. Quality of Evil

Solidarity – friendship – social
charity – civilization of love

Solidarity

“...an elementary principle of sound political organization, namely, the more that individuals are defenseless within a given society, the more they require the care and concern of others, and in particular the intervention of governmental authority.”

From Pope John Paul II, *Centisimus Annus*, 1991,
10.

Proportional Attributes

3. Legacy of Evil

Research

It is essential that Christians examine all the positions of their candidates and their parties and the official Church teachings on said issues.

Christians should research all federal, state, and local candidates for whom they are able to vote.

Importance of Lesser Offices

- Shared values
- Stepping stone to higher offices
- Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity

“A community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.”

From Pope John Paul II, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, 1991, 48.

Conclusion

In making these decisions, it is essential for Catholics to be guided by a well-formed conscience that recognizes that all issues do not carry the same moral weight and that the moral obligation to oppose intrinsically evil acts has a special claim on our consciences and our actions.

Salvation

“It is important to be clear that the political choices faced by citizens not only have an impact on general peace and prosperity but also may affect the individual’s salvation. Similarly, the kinds of laws and policies supported by public officials affect their spiritual well-being...”

From *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: A Call to Political Responsibility from the Catholic Bishops of the United States*, 2007, 38.

Omaha in 1968

George Wallace ran for President in the 1968 election as a third party candidate against Richard Nixon and Hubert Humphrey.

- States' Rights
- Increasing Beneficiaries for Medicare and Social Security
- Law and Order Platform
- Appealed to Union and Blue Collar Workers
- Pro-Segregation