

# CATHOLIC VP v. CATHOLIC VP

Following the announcement by Mitt Romney to have Paul Ryan serve as his running mate, we compared the two Catholic vice presidential candidates.

In many respects, Catholics today are divided into pro-life and social justice camps. That is unfortunate, and while this division can be overstated, it remains true that most Catholic activists sit in either one camp or the other.

Paul Ryan represents the pro-life wing, and Joe Biden represents the social justice wing. Indeed, both exemplify the differences, and not just on the issue of abortion. For example, Ryan's idea of freedom of choice commits him to supporting school vouchers; Biden's notion of choice commits him to abortion rights. Ryan is opposed to reinventing the institution of marriage; Biden wants to expand marriage to include two people of the same sex.

The Catholic Church opposes abortion and gay marriage. On both of these issues, Biden disagrees with the Church. Biden's defenders—social justice Catholics—argue that Ryan's budgetary prescriptions make him the dissident Catholic; his ideas are said to hurt the poor. This assumes, however, that there is a clear Catholic teaching on what constitutes the best means to conquer poverty. There isn't. For instance, fidelity to the Church's preferential option for the poor can be realized by making a serious case to raise taxes, or to lower them. In effect, both Biden and Ryan can plausibly claim to be a champion of the poor. But only Ryan, can be identified as a champion of the unborn.

Not all policy issues are equal. Abortion is regarded by the Church as "intrinsically evil." Moreover, the bishops' conference has explicitly endorsed a constitutional amendment on the traditional definition of marriage. This puts Biden at

a decisive disadvantage in making the case that he better represents Catholic teachings.