

“The Dr. Maura Show”; Episode 43
Comparing Party Platforms to USCCB Policy Positions
Recorded Oct. 11, 2020

Transcript

Hi everyone. This is Dr. Maura and today's show is dedicated to sorting through some of the big issues confronting Catholics as we prepare for the presidential election this November. I will not tell you who to vote for. My objective is to simply lay out the facts. You can make your own decision.

The first thing that I'd like to note is that the Catholic Church has traditionally regarded voting as a sacred duty. In a free republic such as ours, citizens have a good deal to say about the moral direction of their country and with that authority comes a great deal of responsibility. We are morally accountable for the choices we make in the voting booth and just as we are obliged to follow the moral norms of Christ's Church in our personal lives, we are obligated to support candidates and parties who promise to promote those moral norms in our society...insofar as is possible.

And there's the rub, right? I don't think there has ever been a candidate whose campaign promises match the principles of Catholic teaching perfectly and there probably never will be. So how do we, as faithful Catholics, make morally good choices? After all, the Church teaches that all human life is sacred, which means there is a vast array of social justice issues that deserve our attention. The Church is concerned with alleviating poverty, the plight of refugees, and racism, promoting good stewardship of natural resources, defending religious freedom...the list goes on and on. And it seems that neither the Democrat nor the Republican party is ever on board with all of them. So what do we do?

One very important point to keep in mind, when looking at this dizzying variety of issues is that the fact that ALL human life is sacred and that there are many important issues to deal with, does NOT mean that every issue at play has equal weight. I'm going to repeat that point because it is so important. The fact that ALL human life is sacred and that there are many important issues to deal with, does NOT mean that every issue at play has equal weight. Some issues deal with threats that are more immediate, direct and/or severe than others. Some issues have to do with intrinsically evil acts—acts that are always wrong under any circumstance. Catholics may never support these acts. Some issues, however, involve acts that might be good under certain circumstances or genuine disagreements about how best to achieve objectively good goals. Whether or not you support acts in these last two categories is often a matter for prudential judgment.

The issue of abortion is an example of an issue involving intrinsically evil acts that may never be supported by Catholics. For this reason as well as the fact that it is considered a “defining” issue, that is, an issue that strikes at the very foundations of our society and all our other rights, the Church has consistently taught that although abortion is not the ONLY issue that is important, it must be given priority. As the late Cardinal Francis George stated

in a 1996 article for *The Catholic Sentinel*, “Abortion is no more a ‘single issue’ than was slavery. It is, instead, a defining issue, one which shapes the future of the nation.”

Since this fact of church teaching is often obscured or contradicted, I’ll give you a little rundown of some of the many documents that have taught this concept so that you can see how consistent this teaching has been.

In 1974, just one year after abortion had been “legalized” by the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*, the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a “Declaration on Procured Abortion.” Section 11 stated, “The first right of the human person is his life. He has other goods and some are more precious, but this one is fundamental - the condition of all the others.”

In 1988, St. John Paul II published the apostolic exhortation titled *Christifideles Laici*. In section no. 38, he states,

The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life. 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.

John Paul II repeated this doctrine in his 1995 encyclical, *The Gospel of Life*.

The 1998 USCCB document, *Living the Gospel of Life*, provides an excellent summary of how traditionally designated “life issues” and “social justice issues” fit together. It compares the life issues to the foundation of a house and other social justice issues to the house’s crossbeams and walls. Clearly the crossbeams and walls are important, but without the foundation, they will not stand. And, on a personal note, I would be mighty suspicious of anyone who said that they could make a house’s crossbeams and walls stand without benefit of the foundation!

In 2006, Pope Benedict XVI included the protection of life in all its stages, along with the recognition and promotion of the natural structure of the family as a union between a man and a woman based on marriage; and the protection of the right of parents to educate their children as “non-negotiables” in his address *TO THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PEOPLE’S PARTY ON THE OCCASION OF THE STUDY DAYS ON EUROPE*.

The 2012 edition of the USCCB’s “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” states “While there are many moral issues before us, every issue is not equal.” (Available online at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/parishes-and-schools/upload/catholics-care-catholics-vote-bulletin-insert.pdf>.) The first of their five bullet points says “Issues that directly affect human lives—such as abortion and euthanasia—are fundamental and demand serious consideration.”

In his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis states, “Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion. How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties? “If personal and social sensitivity towards the acceptance of the new life is lost, then other forms of acceptance that are valuable for society also wither away” (no. 120).

In the most current edition of the USCCB’s “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship,” the rather lengthy document provides a summary of the USCCB’s policy positions. (Available online at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-part-two>.)

The first issues addressed are under the heading “Human Life.” Here is a quotation from that document: “Our 1998 statement, *Living the Gospel of Life*, declares, ‘Abortion and euthanasia have become preeminent threats to human life and dignity because they directly attack life itself, the most fundamental good and the condition for all others’ (no. 5). Abortion, the deliberate killing of a human being before birth, is never morally acceptable and must always be opposed.”

I am going to speak of more issues today than the issue of abortion, but I have gone into this amount of detail to illustrate that, although the Church and all people who fight to defend life concern themselves with a wide variety of issues pertaining to both life itself and the quality of life, the Church has consistently taught the primacy of life issues such as abortion and euthanasia. Clearly, these issues must be the number one priority for Catholics when we go to the voting booths.

For today’s program, I have pulled the top 12 issues that are listed in the USCCB policy statement that I just referenced. It is within the most current version of “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship.” If you want to read about these policies yourself, you can find the statement online. Google “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship” and look for the section called “Applying Catholic Teaching to Major Issues: A Summary of Policy Positions of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.” (Available online at <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/forming-consciences-for-faithful-citizenship-part-two>.)

In an attempt to cut through biased rhetoric, I have combed through the official party platforms of the Republican and Democrat Party to see how they match up with the USCCB’s top 12 policy positions.

The party platforms are quite long—the Republican platform is 58 pages long and the Democrat platform is 91 pages long—so I won’t be able to cover every detail in them. I’m just going to try to give you a sense of where they stand on each issue identified as important by the USCCB by providing excerpts from the written documents. Now, I’m going to try to be dispassionate about this so that I can provide an honest representation of each party’s thought, so I’ll warn you that this might not be the most exciting talk you’ve

ever heard—but it sure beats wading through 50 to 100 pages of stuff, and it’s extremely important information! I’ll do a wrap-up summary at the end to give you the bottom line.

If you want to read the party platforms in their entirety, you can find them both online. Look for the Democrat Party platform for 2020 and the Republican Party platform for 2016 as they decided not to change it. If you’d like a transcript of this talk so that you can look at the quotations that I am using, contact me at info@lightoftruthministries.org and I will email a copy to you. Once again, that’s info@lightoftruthministries.org.

Okay. So let’s take the first issue on the USCCB’s list and see where each party stands.

1. The first policy statement that the USCCB lists is under the heading, “Human life.” The USCCB includes discussion of many issues such as stem cell research and cloning, but the two most fundamental issues are Abortion and Euthanasia so let’s look at those. We’ve already said that the Church is unequivocally opposed to both as they are intrinsically evil acts.

Where do the Republicans stand on the issues of abortion and euthanasia?

Here is a quote from pages 13 and 14 of the platform: “The Constitution’s guarantee that no one can ‘be deprived of life, liberty or property’ deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence’s proclamation that ‘all’ are ‘endowed by their Creator’ with the inalienable right to life. Accordingly, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to children before birth. We oppose the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion or to fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide or refer for elective abortions or sell fetal body parts rather than provide healthcare. We urge all states and Congress to make it a crime to acquire, transfer, or sell fetal tissues from elective abortions for research, and we call on Congress to enact a ban on any sale of fetal body parts. In the meantime, we call on Congress to ban the practice of misleading women on so-called fetal harvesting consent forms, a fact revealed by a 2015 investigation. We will not fund or subsidize healthcare that includes abortion coverage. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life.”

Regarding the issue of euthanasia, the platform states on the same pages, “We oppose the non-consensual withholding or withdrawal of care or treatment, including food and water, from individuals with disabilities, newborns, the elderly, or the infirm, just as we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide.”

Now let’s look at the Democrat platform. On page 42, the platform states, “Democrats believe every woman should be able to access...abortion. We oppose and will fight to overturn federal and state laws that create barriers to women’s reproductive health and

rights, including by repealing the Hyde Amendment and protecting and codifying the right to reproductive freedom.”

On page 32, the Democrat platform states, “We will repeal the Title X domestic gag rule and restore federal funding for Planned Parenthood...”

On page 39, the Democrat platform states “We will appoint U.S. Supreme Court justices and federal judges who...will respect and enforce foundational precedents including...Roe v. Wade.”

I couldn’t find any mention of assisted suicide or euthanasia in the Democrat party platform.

2. The Death Penalty is also listed in the USCCB document under the heading, “Human Life” and again later under the heading of “Promoting Justice and Countering Violence,” so I decided to give it its own place in our list. Under the heading, “Human Life,” the USCCB document says, “Society has a duty to defend life against violence and to reach out to victims of crime. The Catholic Church has accepted the death penalty in the past for particularly egregious crimes when there was a serious continuing threat to society and no alternative was available. But our nation’s continued reliance on the death penalty cannot be justified. Because we have other ways to protect society that are more respectful of human life, the USCCB supports efforts to end the use of the death penalty...”

What do the Republicans say about the death penalty?

On page 40 of the Republican platform, it says, “The constitutionality of the death penalty is firmly settled by its explicit mention in the Fifth Amendment.”

What do the Democrats say? Page 38 of the platform says “Democrats continue to support abolishing the death penalty.”

3. Under the heading “Promoting Peace” the USCCB says “Catholics must also work to avoid war and to promote peace.” What do Republicans have to say about this?

Page 46 of the Republican platform says, “For the last several generations, our country’s two major political parties were dedicated to the nation’s security and the advance of freedom around the world. Both had learned from mistakes of the past and realized that a weak America invited aggression. Both recognized the need to stand with friends and oppose those who wished us evil. Whatever their disagreements, both the Republican and Democratic parties stood for peace through strength — and strength meant American military superiority...” [The section goes on to include many details about American leadership in countries around the world. U.S. leadership in international organizations; Defending International Religious Freedom; Generous international assistance; Advancing Human Rights; Combatting Human Trafficking; and Protection against the use of nuclear weapons.]

Page 52 of the Republican platform states, “A strong commitment to international development and diplomacy, alongside defense, was a key component of President Reagan’s ‘peace through strength’ strategy. It can sometimes serve as an alternative means of keeping the peace, far less costly both in dollars and in human lives than military engagement.”

What do the Democrats say?

On page 7, “Democrats will lead with diplomacy as our tool of first resort and mobilize our allies and partners to meet the tests none of us can meet on our own. We will stand up to the forces of authoritarianism...” On page 73, Democrats state, “We will ensure that our military has no peer... And we will use force only when necessary, always as a last resort, and with the informed consent of the American people.” On page 74, “Democrats believe that American security and prosperity are enhanced when the United States leads in shaping the rules, forging the agreements, and steering the institutions that guide international relations. We believe the system of international institutions we built and led over the past seven decades has generated an enormous return on our investment. And in today’s more competitive world, its renovation is a critical diplomatic priority.”

4. Under the heading “Marriage and Family,” the USSCB states “The family founded upon marriage is the basic cell of human society. The role, responsibilities, and needs of families should be central national priorities. Marriage must be defined, recognized, and protected as a lifelong exclusive commitment between a man and a woman, and as the source of the next generation and the protective haven for children.⁸ The institution of marriage is undermined by the ideology of “gender” that dismisses sexual difference and the complementarity of the sexes and falsely presents “gender” as nothing more than a social construct or psychological reality, which a person may choose at variance with his or her biological reality.... Policies on taxes, work, divorce, immigration, and welfare should uphold the God-given meaning and value of marriage and family, help families stay together, and reward responsibility and sacrifice for children. Wages should allow workers to support their families, and public assistance should be available to help poor families to live in dignity. Such assistance should be provided in a manner that promotes eventual financial autonomy.”

What do Republicans have to say about this issue?

Page 11 of the Republican party platform includes a section titled, “Defending Marriage Against an Activist Judiciary” Here is an excerpt from that section: “Traditional marriage and family, based on marriage between one man and one woman, is the foundation for a free society and has for millennia been entrusted with rearing children and instilling cultural values.”

On page 31, under a section titled “American values,” the document says, “we have learned over the last five decades, the loss of faith and family life leads to greater dependence upon government. That is why Republicans formulate public policy, from taxation to education, from healthcare to welfare, with attention to the needs and strengths of the family...”

On page 35, under a section titled Title IX, they say, “We emphatically support the original, authentic meaning of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. It affirmed that ‘no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.’ That language opened up for girls and women a world of opportunities that had too often been denied to them. That same provision of law is now being used ... to impose a social and cultural revolution upon the American people by wrongly redefining sex discrimination to include sexual orientation or other categories.”

The Democrat party platform does not provide a definition of marriage and family structure as such. It does, however, provide some statements that seem to indicate the Democrat position on this issue. Page 32 states, “We recognize that...medically accurate, LGBTQ+ inclusive, age-appropriate sex education; and the full range of family planning services are all essential to ensuring that people can decide if, when, and how to start a family.”

On page 33, “Democrats will...restore nondiscrimination protections for LGBTQ+...in health insurance, including coverage of all medically necessary care for gender transition. We will also take action to guarantee that LGBTQ+ people...have full access to needed health care and resources, including by requiring that federal health plans provide coverage for...gender confirmation surgery, and hormone therapy.”

On the bottom of page 62 and on to 63, the Democrat platform says they will “ensure that same sex-couples and their children receive equal treatment in the immigration and naturalization systems.”

5. In the section titled “Religious Freedom,” The USCCB states “US policy should promote religious liberty vigorously, both at home and abroad.” It also states “In the United States, religious freedom generally enjoys strong protection in our law and culture, but those protections are now in doubt. For example, the longstanding tax exemption of the Church has been explicitly called into question at the highest levels of government, precisely because of her teachings on marriage.”

Page 11 of the Republican platform has a section titled “The First Amendment: Religious Liberty.” Here are some excerpts “The Bill of Rights lists religious liberty, with its rights of conscience, as the first freedom to be protected. Religious freedom in the Bill of Rights protects the right of the people to practice their faith in their everyday lives. ...” “Ongoing attempts to compel individuals, businesses, and institutions of faith to transgress their beliefs are part of a misguided effort to undermine religion and drive it from the public square. As a result, many charitable religious institutions that have demonstrated great success in helping the needy have been barred from receiving government grants and contracts. Government officials threaten religious colleges and universities with massive fines and seek to control their personnel decisions. Places of worship for the first time in our history have reason to fear the loss of tax-exempt status merely for espousing and practicing traditional religious beliefs that have been held across the world for thousands

of years, and for almost four centuries in America. We value the right of America's religious leaders to preach, and Americans to speak freely, according to their faith. Republicans believe the federal government, specifically the IRS, is constitutionally prohibited from policing or censoring speech based on religious convictions or beliefs, ... We pledge to defend the religious beliefs and rights of conscience of all Americans and to safeguard religious institutions against government control. We endorse the First Amendment Defense Act, Republican legislation in the House and Senate which will bar government discrimination against individuals and businesses for acting on the belief that marriage is the union of one man and one woman. This Act would protect the non-profit tax status of faith-based adoption agencies, the accreditation of religious educational institutions, the grants and contracts of faith-based charities and small businesses, and the licensing of religious professions..."

Page 2 of the Republican platform states "Because of the vital role of religious organizations, charities, and fraternal benevolent societies in fostering generosity and patriotism, they should not be subject to taxation and donations to them should remain deductible."

Page 48 of the Democrat platform has a section titled "Supporting Faith and Service." This section of the Democrat platform says "Religious freedom is a core American value and a core value of the Democratic Party. Democrats will protect the rights of each American for the free exercise of his or her own religion. It will be the policy of the Democratic Administration to advocate for religious freedom throughout the world. Democrats celebrate America's history of religious pluralism and tolerance, and recognize the countless acts of service of our faith communities, as well as the paramount importance of maintaining the separation between church and state enshrined in our Constitution."

This same section also says "We will reject the Trump Administration's use of broad religious exemptions to allow businesses, medical providers, social service agencies, and others to discriminate."

6. The next section of the USCCB document is titled "Preferential Option for the Poor and Economic Justice." This section of the USCCB document covers a variety of issues pertaining to human dignity including the following: "Economic decisions and institutions should be assessed according to whether they protect or undermine the dignity of the human person. Social and economic policies should foster the creation of jobs for all who can work with decent working conditions and just wages." This section of the USCCB document goes on to support labor unions, as well as "economic freedom, initiative, and the right to private property." It advocates for welfare policies that support the family and reduce dependency and tax credits as safety nets. It also highlights the importance of faith-based groups, affordable housing, and support for agriculture.

The economic policies put forth by both parties are rather long and detailed, so I will try to give you a broad overview of their respective positions, but will not be able to cover every point in them.

Page 1 of the Republican Party platform states, “Government cannot create prosperity, though government can limit or destroy it. Prosperity is the product of self-discipline, enterprise, saving and investment by individuals, but it is not an end in itself. Prosperity provides the means by which citizens and their families can maintain their independence from government, raise their children by their own values, practice their faith, and build communities of cooperation and mutual respect. It is also the foundation for our nation’s global leadership, for it is the vigor of our economy which makes possible our military strength and our national security.”

Page 1 also states, “Agricultural production and exports are central to the Republican agenda for jobs, growth, expanded trade, and prosperity.”

Page 2 of the Republican platform states, “We oppose tax policies that deliberately divide Americans or promote class warfare.”

Page 7, of the Republican Party platform states, ““The greatest asset of the American economy is the hard-working American. That is why our first priority is getting people back to work by fostering the kind of growth that creates jobs. That overarching goal unites all the sections of this platform.”

The remainder of this rather lengthy section endorses “flexible and family-friendly” health insurance and portable pension plans (p. 8). It stresses the need for union transparency and accountability and endorses “Right-to-Work” legislation to encourage “workplace flexibility.” (p. 8)

The Republican platform also endorses “employee stock ownership plans that enable workers to become capitalists, expand the realm of private property, and energize a free enterprise economy. Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.” (p.8)

The Republican platform includes sections on reducing the national debt so that it will not “burden” future generations (p. 8); preserving Social Security (p. 24); and eliminate “Crony Capitalism and Corporate Welfare” (p. 28), which occurs “When government uses taxpayer funding and resources to give special advantages to private companies,”(p.28) Republicans state, that “By enlarging the scope of government and placing enormous power in the hands of bureaucrats, it multiplies opportunities for corruption and favoritism. It is the enemy of reform in education, the workplace, and healthcare. It gives us financial regulation that protects the large at the cost of the small.”

On to the Democrat party platform...

Page 6 of the Democrat platform says, “Democrats will forge a new social and economic contract with the American people—a contract that creates millions of new jobs and promotes shared prosperity, closes racial gaps in income and wealth, guarantees the right to join or form a union, raises wages and ensures equal pay for women and paid family leave for all, and safeguards a secure and dignified retirement.”

Pages 14 to 15 state, “Democrats will fight to raise wages for working people and improve job quality and security, including by raising the federal minimum wage so it reaches \$15 an hour by 2026.” “We will repeal so-called “right to work” laws....”

The Democrat platform goes on to state, “We will take action to guarantee that when workers come to the table, they are able to bargain with the employers who actually hold the power, including franchisors, and penalize companies that bargain in bad faith with their workers. Democrats will vigorously protect all private-sector workers’ right to strike without fear of coercion, interference, and undue delay. We will also establish the federal government’s role in promoting and facilitating collective bargaining...” (p.15)

Also on page 15 the Democrat platform states, “We will increase funding and staffing at the Department of Labor to aggressively enforce wage, hour, health, and safety rules across the economy.” “Democrats will implement paid sick days and a high-quality, comprehensive, and inclusive paid family and medical leave system...”

The Democrat platform has a long list of programs and ideals for which they propose government funding or increased funding. These include child care, compensation for all care providers, pre-K programs for three and four-year-olds, home and community-based care for seniors and people with disabilities, transportation, infrastructure, shipping, space and technology, “innovation hubs and government programs to provide small manufacturers with technical and business expertise,” “career and technical education and high-quality job training programs with formal worker representation in program development, including pre-apprenticeship opportunities and registered apprenticeships.” “the Housing Trust Fund,” and food assistance programs.

Democrats favor the expansion of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) ownership and operating loan programs.” and “the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.” (p. 18) They endorse a “more progressive Social Security” (p. 26); believe the “tax system has been rigged against the American people” and promise We will make sure the wealthy pay their fair share in taxes.” (p. 22)

7. Under “Health Care,” the USCCB document says the following: “Affordable and accessible health care is an essential safeguard of human life and a fundamental human right.... The nation’s health care system needs to be rooted in values that respect human dignity, protect human life, respect the principle of subsidiarity, and meet the needs of the poor and uninsured, especially born and unborn children, pregnant women, immigrants, and other vulnerable populations. Employers, including religious groups and family-owned businesses, should be able to provide health care without compromising their moral or religious convictions, and individuals should be able to purchase health care that accords with their faith. The USCCB supports measures to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid....”

On page 23 of their platform, the Republican party says, “We intend to save Medicare by modernizing it, empowering its participants, and putting it on a secure financial footing.”

Regarding healthcare in general, page 36 states, “we must combine what worked best in the past with changes needed for the future. We must recover the traditional patient-physician relationship based on mutual trust, informed consent, and confidentiality....we will reduce mandates and enable insurers and providers of care to increase healthcare options and contain costs. Our goal is to ensure that all Americans have improved access to affordable, high-quality healthcare, including those struggling with mental illness.”

“We will return to the states their historic role of regulating local insurance markets, limit federal requirements on both private insurance and Medicaid, and call on state officials to reconsider the costly medical mandates, imposed under their own laws, that price millions of low-income families out of the insurance market. To guarantee first-rate care for the needy, we propose to block grant Medicaid and other payments and to assist all patients, including those with pre-existing conditions, to obtain coverage in a robust consumer market... we will promote price transparency so consumers can know the cost of treatments before they agree to them. We will empower individuals and small businesses to form purchasing pools in order to expand coverage to the uninsured. We believe that individuals with preexisting conditions who maintain continuous coverage should be protected from discrimination.”

Page 13 states “We will not fund or subsidize healthcare that includes abortion coverage.”

On Page 37, under a section titled “Protecting Individual Conscience in Healthcare,” the Republican Platform provides a substantial discussion about protecting the rights of conscience for individual health care professionals, organizations, and especially faith-based groups when practicing in their professions and/or choosing healthcare coverage. The section further stresses “the right of parents to determine the proper medical treatment and therapy for their minor children....”

Page 6 of the Democrat platform endorses universal health care.

On page 28, in a section titled “Achieving Universal, Affordable, Quality Healthcare,” the platform states, “Democrats believe we need to protect, strengthen, and build upon our bedrock health care programs, including the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Veterans Affairs (VA) system. Private insurers need real competition to ensure they have incentive to provide affordable, quality coverage to every American.”

Democrats state, “Everyone will be eligible to choose the public option or another Affordable Care Act marketplace plan.” (p. 28)

“Democrats will also empower the states, as laboratories of democracy, to use Affordable Care Act innovation waivers to develop locally tailored approaches to health coverage, including by removing barriers to states that seek to experiment with statewide universal health care approaches.” (p. 28)

This section proposes “substantially” increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and for state and local public health departments”(p. 28); as well as the creation of “a new, high-quality public option without premiums.” (p.28)

“Democrats support doubling investments in community health centers and rural health clinics in underserved urban and rural areas.” (p. 28)

8. Under “Migration,” the USCCB document states “The Gospel mandate to “welcome the stranger” requires Catholics to care for and stand with newcomers, authorized and unauthorized...Comprehensive reform is urgently necessary to fix a broken immigration system and should include a broad and fair legalization program....[It also states] The right and responsibility of nations to control their borders and to maintain the rule of law should be recognized but pursued in a just and humane manner.”

On page 25 of the platform, Republicans state, “Our party is the natural home for those who come in search of freedom and justice. We welcome all to the Great Opportunity Party.... Our immigration system must protect American working families and their wages, for citizens and legal immigrants alike, in a way that will improve the economy. Just as immigrant labor helped build our country in the past, today’s legal immigrants are making vital contributions in every aspect of national life. ... America’s immigration policy must serve the national interest of the United States, and the interests of American workers must be protected over the claims of foreign nationals seeking the same jobs.... Illegal immigration endangers everyone, exploits the taxpayers, and insults all who aspire to enter America legally. We oppose any form of amnesty for those who, by breaking the law, have disadvantaged those who have obeyed it.”

Page 62 of the Democrat platform states, “Democrats believe it is long past time to provide a roadmap to citizenship for the millions of undocumented workers, caregivers, students, and children who are an essential part of our economy and of the fabric of our nation.” “We will...eliminate unfair barriers to naturalization, reduce application backlogs, and make our immigration processes faster, more efficient, and less costly.” “Democrats believe family unity should be a guiding principle for our immigration policy. We will prioritize family reunification for children still separated from their families...” “We support legislation to treat the spouses and children of green card holders as immediate relatives and end their unfair separation. We will eliminate family-based green card backlogs and reform the system to speed up family-based visas. And we will work with Congress to eliminate immigration barriers...and remove the 10-year waiting period for waivers to the permanent bars that keep loved ones apart.”

9. The next USCCB topic is called “Catholic Education.” Here is the first paragraph under that heading: “Parents—the first and most important educators—have a fundamental right to choose the education best suited to the needs of their children, including public, private, and religious schools. Government, through such means as tax credits and publicly funded scholarships, should help provide resources for parents, especially those of modest means, to exercise this basic right without discrimination. Students in all educational settings should have opportunities for moral and character formation consistent with the beliefs and responsibilities of their parents.”

Page 33 of the Republican platform states, “Education is much more than schooling. It is the whole range of activities by which families and communities transmit to a younger generation, not just knowledge and skills, but ethical and behavioral norms and traditions. It is the handing over of a cultural identity. That is why American education has, for the last several decades, been the focus of constant controversy, as centralizing forces from outside the family and community have sought to remake education in order to remake America.”

“Parents are a child’s first and foremost educators, and have primary responsibility for the education of their children. Parents have a right to direct their children’s education, care, and upbringing. We support a constitutional amendment to protect that right from interference by states, the federal government, or international bodies such as the United Nations. We reject a one size-fits-all approach to education and support a broad range of choices for parents and children at the state and local level.” “We support options for learning, including home-schooling, career and technical education, private or parochial schools, magnet schools, charter schools, online learning, and early-college high schools.” (P. 33)

On pages 33 to 34, the Republican platform states, “Maintaining American preeminence requires a world-class system of education in which all students can reach their potential.... After years of trial and error, we know the policies and methods that have actually made a difference in student advancement: Choice in education; building on the basics; STEM subjects and phonics; career and technical education; ending social promotions; merit pay for good teachers; classroom discipline; parental involvement; and strong leadership by principals, superintendents, and locally elected school boards. Because technology has become an essential tool of learning, it must be a key element in our efforts to provide every child equal access and opportunity. We strongly encourage instruction in American history and civics by using the original documents of our founding fathers.”

Finally, on page 34, the Republican platform states, “We renew our call for replacing “family planning” programs for teens with sexual risk avoidance education that sets abstinence until marriage as the responsible and respected standard of behavior. That approach — the only one always effective against premarital pregnancy and sexually-transmitted disease — empowers teens to achieve optimal health outcomes. We oppose school-based clinics that provide referral or counseling for abortion and contraception and believe that federal funds should not be used in mandatory or universal mental health, psychiatric, or socio-emotional screening programs. The federal government has pushed states to collect and share vast amounts of personal student and family data, including the collection of social and emotional data. Much of this data is collected without parental consent or notice. This is wholly incompatible with the American Experiment and our inalienable rights.”

Page 64 of the Democrat platform states, “As Democrats, we believe that education is a critical public good—not a commodity—and that it is the government’s responsibility to ensure that every child, everywhere, is able to receive a world-class education that enables them to lead meaningful lives, no matter their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity,

national origin, religion, disability status, language status, immigration or citizenship status, household income or ZIP code.”

Page 65 of the Democrat platform states, “We will work with states to offer pre-K for all three- and four-year-olds and expand Head Start and Early Head Start. We will drive increased resources to the communities with the highest need...”

Page 66 of the Democrat platform states, “Democrats support making child care and dependent tax credits significantly more generous and will increase funding to states to guarantee that low-income and middle class families can afford child care. We will make major investments to increase quality options for parents and increase compensation for providers. Democrats also support expanding proven programs for low-income and first-time parents, guardians, and caregivers, including home visiting, that can help connect families in need to child care, education, and child development opportunities and improve outcomes for children and parents alike.”

Page 65 of the Democrat platform states, “We will reimagine our education system guided by the stakeholders and qualified, first-class, well-trained, passionate educators who know these issues best.”

Page 67 states, “Democrats oppose private school vouchers and other policies that divert taxpayer-funded resources away from the public school system.”

Page 69 says that Democrats “will make public colleges and universities tuition-free for students whose families earn less than \$125,000... Democrats support making community colleges and trade schools tuition-free for all students, including Dreamers.”

Pages 68 to 69 state, “Democrats will fight to create a federal funding program for higher education, modeled on Title I funding for K-12 schools, that would direct funds to public and nonprofit colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions based on the proportion of low-income students those schools enroll and graduate.”

10. The next topic on the USCCB list is called “Promoting Justice and Countering Violence.” Here are some highlights: “Promoting moral responsibility and effective responses to violent crime, curbing violence in media, supporting reasonable restrictions on access to assault weapons and handguns, and opposing the use of the death penalty are particularly important in light of a growing “culture of violence.” An ethic of responsibility, rehabilitation, and restoration should be a foundation for the reform of our broken criminal justice system.” We’ve already talked about the death penalty. What else do the Republicans have to say about this topic?
On page 39 of the Republican party platform in a section titled “Ensuring Safe Neighborhoods: Criminal Justice and Prison Reform,” the platform states, “Two grave problems undermine the rule of law on the federal level: Over-criminalization and over-federalization.”

On pages 39 to 40 of the platform, Republicans state, “Along with diversion of first-time, nonviolent offenders to community sentencing, accountability courts, drug courts, veterans treatment courts, and guidance by faith based institutions with proven track records of rehabilitation, our platform emphasized restorative justice to make the victim whole and put the offender on the right path.”

Page 40 of the Republican platform states, “Public officials must regain control of their correctional institutions, some of which have become ethnic and racial battlegrounds. Persons jailed for whatever cause should be protected against cruel or degrading treatment by other inmates. Courts should not tie the hands of prison officials in dealing with these problems. We encourage states to offer opportunities for literacy and vocational education to prepare prisoners for release to the community. Breaking the cycle of crime begins with the children of those who are prisoners. Deprived of a parent through no fault of their own, youngsters from these families should be a special concern of our schools, social services, and religious institutions.”

[This section includes ways to deal with a wide variety of topics including Internet pornography and drug abuse. Pages 12 and 13 of the Republican platform express support for the Second Amendment right to bear arms for lawful citizens, object to what Republicans perceive as unjust regulations, and call for an investigation of “the deadly ‘Fast and Furious’ operation perpetrated by Department of Justice officials who approved and allowed illegal sales of guns to known violent criminals.”]

On page 35 of the Democrat party platform, in a section called “Protecting our Communities and Building Trust by Reforming our Criminal Justice System,” the platform states, “Democrats believe we need to overhaul the criminal justice system from top to bottom.”

Page 36 states, “Democrats believe we must ensure real accountability for individual and systemic misconduct in our police departments, prevent law enforcement from becoming unnecessarily entangled in the everyday lives of Americans, and reimagine policing for the benefit and safety of the American people. In recent years, some innovative police departments have enacted evidence-based reforms to change their approach by investing in robust training and putting in place—and, even more crucially, enforcing—strong standards governing conflict resolution, de-escalation, and use of force. We must ... implement them nationwide. Democrats will establish strict national standards governing the use of force, including banning the use of chokeholds and carotid holds.”

[This section also advocates for increased funding for educators, social workers, and psychologists that work with underprivileged children to reduce incarceration rates.]

Page 36 of the Democrat platform states, “The federal government will incentivize states to stop incarcerating kids, and develop community-based alternatives to prison and detention centers for youth and invest in after-school programs, community centers, and summer jobs to provide opportunities for young people at risk.”

On the same page, Democrats state, “It is past time to end the failed “War on Drugs,” which has imprisoned millions of Americans—disproportionately Black people and Latinos—and hasn’t been effective in reducing drug use. ... Democrats believe no one should be in prison solely because they use drugs. Democrats will decriminalize marijuana use and reschedule it through executive action on the federal level.”

On pages 47 to 48 the Democrat platform lists several specific measures to increase regulations regarding the sale, purchase, and storage of guns as well as penalties for their misuse.

11. The USCCB is concerned with “Combatting Unjust Discrimination.” They say, “It is important for our society to continue to combat any unjust discrimination, whether based on race, religion, sex, ethnicity, disabling condition, or age, as these are grave injustices and affronts to human dignity.”

Page 9 of the Republican platform states, “We denounce bigotry, racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, and religious intolerance. Therefore, we oppose discrimination based on race, sex, religion, creed, disability, or national origin and support statutes to end such discrimination. As the Party of Abraham Lincoln, we must continue to foster solutions to America’s difficult challenges when it comes to race relations today.”

Regarding discrimination in the workforce, page 6 of the Republican platform states, “All Americans deserve the opportunity to pursue their American dream free from discrimination. Clear nondiscrimination policies ensure all employees have the chance to succeed based solely on their merits. These policies are vital to creating an inclusive, innovative, and competitive workforce.”

On page 35 of the platform, in the section on Education, Republicans state, “We emphatically support the original, authentic meaning of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. It affirmed that ‘no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.’”

The Republican platform also includes section titled, “Honoring our Relationship with American Indians,” (p. 28) that acknowledges our government’s failures in its responsibility to Indian Tribal Governments, American Indians, and Alaska Natives” and the need to honor its “obligations.”

Page 6 of the Democrat party platform states, “Democrats will root out structural and systemic racism in our economy and our society, and reform our criminal justice system from top to bottom, because we believe Black lives matter.”

“Democrats will protect and promote the equal rights of all our citizens—women, LGBTQ+ people, religious minorities, people with disabilities, Native Americans, and all who have been discriminated against in too many ways and for too many generations.” (p. 6.)

Page 16 states, “Democrats believe we need to be much more proactive and aggressive in rooting out discrimination in our employment system. We will increase funding to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and increase its authority to initiate directed investigations into civil rights violations, violations of the rights of people with disabilities, and violations against LGBTQ+ people, especially transgender women of color. Federal contractors should be required to develop and disclose plans to recruit and promote people of color, women, LGBTQ+ people, people with disabilities, and veterans—and be held accountable for delivering.”

Page 19 of the Democrat platform states, “We will support women innovators and innovators of color, encourage diversity in technology, and promote business models that reinvest in low-income communities and communities of color.”

Page 31 states, “Democrats will launch a sustained, government-wide effort, with leadership at the highest levels, to eliminate racial, ethnic, gender, and geographic gaps in insurance rates, access to quality care, and health outcomes.”

Page 37 states, “Democrats also support measures to increase diversity among the ranks of police departments, so our law enforcement agencies look more like the communities they serve.”

12. The last section of the USCCB policy statement that we’d like to look at today is called “Care for Our Common Home.” Here are the first two sentences: “Care for Creation is a moral issue. Protecting the land, water, and air we share is a religious duty of stewardship and reflects our responsibility to born and unborn children, who are most vulnerable to environmental assault.”

Page 20 of the Republican platform states “Conservation is inherent in conservatism. As the pioneer of environmentalism a century ago, the Republican Party reaffirms the moral obligation to be good stewards of the God-given natural beauty and resources of our country. We believe that people are the most valuable resources and that human health and safety are the proper measurements of a policy’s success. We assert that private ownership has been the best guarantee of conscientious stewardship...”

Page 21 of the Republican platform states “The environment is too important to be left to radical environmentalists. They are using yesterday’s tools to control a future they do not comprehend. The environmental establishment has become a self-serving elite, stuck in the mindset of the 1970s, subordinating the public’s consensus to the goals of the Democratic Party. Their approach is based on shoddy science, scare tactics, and centralized command-and-control regulation...The central fact of any sensible environmental policy is that, year by year, the environment is improving.... As a nation, we have drastically reduced pollution, mainstreamed recycling, educated the public, and avoided ecological degradation. Even if no additional controls are added, air pollution will continue to decline for the next several decades due to technological turnover of aging equipment....We propose to shift responsibility for environmental regulation from the federal bureaucracy to the states and to transform the EPA into an independent bipartisan commission, similar to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, with structural safeguards against politicized science. We will

strictly limit congressional delegation of rule-making authority, and require that citizens be compensated for regulatory takings.”

Page 22 of the Republican platform states, “Information concerning a changing climate, especially projections into the long-range future, must be based on dispassionate analysis of hard data. We will enforce that standard throughout the executive branch, among civil servants and presidential appointees alike. The United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a political mechanism, not an unbiased scientific institution. Its unreliability is reflected in its intolerance toward scientists and others who dissent from its orthodoxy. We will evaluate its recommendations accordingly...We firmly believe environmental problems are best solved by giving incentives for human ingenuity and the development of new technologies, not through top-down, command-and-control regulations that stifle economic growth and cost thousands of jobs.”

Page 6 of the Democrat platform states, “Democrats will rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and go further, building a thriving, equitable, and globally competitive clean energy economy that puts workers and communities first, and leaves no one behind.”

Page 49 of the Democrat platform states, “Climate change is a global emergency. We have no time to waste in taking action to protect Americans’ lives and futures.”

Page 50 of the Democrat platform states, “We will use federal resources and authorities across all agencies to deploy proven clean energy solutions... upgrade and make resilient our energy, water, wastewater, and transportation infrastructure; and develop and manufacture next-generation technologies to address the climate crisis right here in the United States.”

Page 51 of the Democrat platform states, “We ... must achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and no later than 2050. To reach net-zero emissions as rapidly as possible, Democrats commit to eliminating carbon pollution from power plants by 2035 through technology-neutral standards for clean energy and energy efficiency. We will dramatically expand solar and wind energy deployment through community-based and utility-scale systems, including in rural areas. Within five years, we will install 500 million solar panels, including eight million solar roofs and community solar energy systems, and 60,000 wind turbines, and turn American ingenuity into American jobs by leveraging federal policy to manufacture renewable energy solutions in America. Recognizing the urgent need to decarbonize the power sector, our technology-neutral approach is inclusive of all zero-carbon technologies, including hydroelectric power, geothermal, existing and advanced nuclear, and carbon capture and storage.”

Conclusions

So, what can we conclude from all this? Based on the information that I’ve collected from the USCCB and each party platform, I will summarize what appear to me to be important areas of agreement and disagreement.

1. In the category of “Human Life,” the Republican platform seems to strongly agree with the USCCB policy position on all life issues except the death penalty. The Democrat platform seems to strongly **disagree** with the USCCB policy position on all life issues except the death penalty.
2. In the category of “Marriage and Family,” the Republican platform seems to strongly agree with the USCCB policy position. The Democrat platform does not provide a definition of “marriage” or “family,” but strongly endorses support for gender surgery and hormone therapy, recognizes same sex-couples, and supports “medically accurate, LGBTQ+ inclusive, age-appropriate sex education; and the full range of family planning services... essential to ensuring that people can decide if, when, and how to start a family.” This seems to suggest that the Democrat platform disagrees with the USCCB policy position on marriage and family.
3. In the category of “Religious Freedom,” the Republican platform seems to strongly agree with the USCCB policy position. The message in the Democrat platform is mixed. The Democrat platform states that it will protect the free exercise of religion, but emphasizes the importance of separation of Church and state and objects to religious exemptions that Democrats say allow for discrimination.
4. Under “Catholic Education,” the Republican platform seems to strongly agree with the USCCB policy position. The Democrat platform agrees with the USCCB on the issue of providing education for the disadvantaged, but strongly disagrees with the USCCB on the issue of school choice and seems to disagree with the USCCB on the issue of parental control.
5. For all the other USCCB policy positions that we’ve looked at—“Promoting Peace;” “Preferential Option for the Poor and Economic Justice;” “Health Care;” “Migration;” “Promoting Justice and Countering Violence;” “Combatting Unjust Discrimination;” and “Care for Our Common Home”—the stated goals of each party are in harmony with the USCCB policy positions. The two parties differ—sometimes drastically—in terms of their diagnoses and analyses of the problems involved and the methods they propose for fixing the problems. Generally speaking, the Republican platform favors subsidiarity and private initiatives and the Democrat platform favors centralized control and federal initiatives.

I hope that this overview of each platform in comparison to the USCCB policy positions will be helpful to you as you make your final decisions for the 2020 presidential elections.

OR...You can find this audio recording and a written transcript online at the Light of Truth website. That’s www.lightoftruthministries.org. Once again, that’s www.lightoftruthministries.org. Click on the “video” button and look for Episode 43.

And please, tell all your friends!
Thank you so much for listening!

God bless you and our nation!