

All Saints Day  
November 1, 2016

Dear Parish Family,

Our help is in the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth!

**They call it a house divided.** I have sons who ended up attending two universities in Indiana that are fierce rivals (Purdue University and Indiana University). We are a house divided. It is hard for Joy and I to know which team to cheer for when their sports teams are playing each other. Regardless of which team wins one member of our family wins and the other loses.

I write to you with deep concern that our country is itself a house divided right now and about matters far, far more significant than sporting events. Today is one week away from an historic presidential election in our country. It is historic for reasons that are not good reasons. No matter who wins this election there will be more than half of the country who will have “lost”. Division about this presidential race has touched core emotions for many. The division runs through communities, churches and even families. We have seen violence erupt at rallies. We have heard terrible reports that call into serious question the character of both candidates.

Political races by definition always bring some division, but this race has touched upon serious problems and concerns in our nation. It comes at a time of increasing polarization and politicization of everything. Politics involves differing parties trying to win over public opinion about a person or issue. And politicization has reached into science, religion and eroded civility in discourse. We live in a Political Age.

I think we are all ready for this election to be over on Tuesday, November 8, but I fear that it won't be. Besides the fact that this seems to be tightening to a very close race that may end up being contested, whoever wins will do so with more than half of the voters in our country being disturbed about the result. More than that, it seems that over half of our nation will not have respect for “the other” candidate and may have serious emotional reactions to that candidate becoming our next president. There is potential for civil unrest around us, and much psychological turmoil within.

I write this as a pastoral letter to you, in the spirit of offering some encouragement. I would like to suggest a few things:

- 1) **As Christians our hope is not in human structures, governments and institutions.** Though we should seek justice and righteousness in these and be actively involved, we do not ultimately trust in these to be our “salvation”. It is the Lord to whom we must look for help. Our citizenship is heaven. We are only travelers here passing through. This means that even when things do not go as we would like them to turn out politically, there is still hope. God will be in it somewhere. Salvation comes from Christ alone.
- 2) **The Scriptures make clear that world leaders come to power only when God permits them to do so.** Romans 13:1-2a reads: “Let every person be

subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists authority resists what God has appointed..." This does not mean that the ruler will necessarily be a good ruler or good for the nation being ruled. It may mean that God intends for things to get a whole lot worse before they get better. That may be true in this coming election for our country. Nevertheless, we must trust in God and call upon Him for mercy. Even if your candidate loses, God is still the Sovereign Lord. God will be in it somewhere.

- 3) **I would encourage you to vote.** You can't really sit this one out. If you normally vote for one party and decide not to vote, you are not really abstaining, you are voting for the other side. To not vote, is to vote. I am not asking you to violate your conscience, but do keep in mind the outcome of your decision. Perhaps looking beyond the questionable personalities to the policies might help some in deciding how to vote.
- 4) Finally, **seek unity and peace.** As Christians we have good news: in Christ there is neither East nor West, North or South, Jew or Greek, male or female, (cf. Gal 3:26-28) Democrat or Republican, and so on....we are all made one in Christ. We are all children of God. As Christians we have a common Lord and a common purpose. We are called to be Christ's ambassadors in this world and this world is going to be in need of the loving, healing, unifying, comforting message of God's peace after Election Day. Will you be willing to be an agent for love, unity, and peace no matter what happens? Can you forgive?

This historic election is an opportunity for all of us to not just merely say the words we pray, but live them. Practice forgiveness and love toward those with whom you disagree. Seek and serve Christ in all persons loving your neighbor as yourself. Perhaps now more than ever we need to embody the prayer attributed to St. Francis. It is with that prayer that I close this letter. Please join me in praying it in the days, week, and months to come.

The Lord Be With You,



Kent R Walley  
Rector, St. Luke's Gladstone, NJ

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon;  
Where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith;  
Where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;  
Where there is sadness, joy.  
Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and  
it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*