



The Episcopal Diocese of Spokane

The Rt. Rev'd Gretchen M. Rehberg, Bishop

A Pastoral Letter to the Diocese of Spokane

July 16, 2024

On Saturday, July 13, former President Trump was shot while campaigning in Pennsylvania. I wish I could say that violence in our political realm surprised me, but unfortunately, violence has been part of politics, perhaps, since the beginning of recorded time. While in my own lifetime, I think it is worse. Many would argue that the level of violence today is no worse than previous generations. Regardless, for the followers of Jesus, violence is not the way.

We are in a Presidential election year with both of the major parties having their conventions this summer, and we will be heading into a very contentious election. The language has already been extremely negative, and the divisions are deep. How shall we be in these times? What is the response for Episcopalians in such divisive political times? A divided country needs a united Church. Not united around political parties or partisan issues, but united around the way of Jesus, the way of love. We are called to be united in offering compassion, seeking understanding, standing in mercy, showing forgiveness. We are called to be united in respecting dignity, seeing Christ in the face of the other, serving all. A divided country needs a united Church that understands that followers of Jesus might disagree with one another about how to address issues facing us, but that disagreement does not diminish the humanity of the other. A divided country needs a united Church that can show a way for others to live, a way of love in the midst of division, and kindness in the midst of disdain.

There are real and serious issues facing all our communities, our country, and indeed, our world. As citizens of this country, those of us who are privileged to vote are called to do so. Voting is a privilege and makes a difference. Yet no political party, no political system will save the world. We cannot expect any political party to bring about the Kingdom of God. We cannot vote in the kingdom of heaven. To trust in the rules of this world, to bring about the reign of God, is to fall into the same temptation Jesus rejected when Satan showed him all the kingdoms of the world and offered it to him if Jesus would have just worshipped him. As followers of Jesus, no political party, no political system, can be of more important or have our higher allegiance, than Jesus.

The coming months will be challenging. For the world around us wants to keep people divided. The powers of evil and hatred will be working, and so must the powers of love. A divided country needs a united Church! Let us be united in love. Be united in forgiveness. Be united in compassion. Be united in seeking understanding. Be united in refusing to demonize, refusing to dehumanize, refusing to denigrate. Hate is easy, love is better. Violence is easy, peace is better. Division is easy, unity is better. Unity, not as believing the same thing about every issue, but about our commitment to the way of love.

I implore each one of you to commit, again, to the way of Jesus, the way of love. I ask you to read and renew our baptism vows. I urge you to be united this political season, and to offer this world a different way, the way of love.

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