

**October 30, 2016**  
**31st Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Lord, you overlook people's sins so that they may believe in you**

*We follow the coming elections not just as Democrats or Republicans,  
but as Catholics committed to our faith, our families and the common good.*

**Politics and Religion**

This past week, I read an informative article by Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese in the *National Catholic Reporter* for October 20, 2016 titled, "*Churches and Political Parties are in same Pickle.*" It highlights the juxtaposition of our politics and religion. It is especially relevant at this particular time in our nation's and church's history. The following is an excerpt from that article.

"There is an interesting parallel between American religious institutions and political parties. The percent of people who do not identify with a political party has been increasing just as the percent of people who do not identify with a religion are increasing. In 2014, 39 percent of Americans identified as independents, the highest percentage of independents in more than [75 years of public opinion polling](#). Likewise, the number of people identifying as "nones," not identifying with any religion, is 25 percent of the U.S. population, about the same as identify as Catholics. The alienation of young people from religious institutions and political independents is a growing phenomenon.

"The reasons people abandon organized religion and political parties are similar:

- † the institution is not fulfilling their needs, especially the young
- † they do not believe in its platforms
- † they are disillusioned with the institution's leadership

In short, people feel betrayed and abandoned by the institution, and their response is to abandon the institution, whether it is a party or a church.

"There are conflicts within political parties and religious organizations. Different factions are fighting over the soul of the institution, whether church or party. Likewise, churches are divided. Conflicts between religious groups in the U.S. have declined, but religious groups are harder on their own dissidents than on adherents of other faiths.

"A final similarity is that religious and party followers are both looking for a messianic leader to implement their views and save the world. Conservative Catholics saw John Paul as this leader, while progressive Catholics look to Francis. Antiestablishment Democrats turned to Bernie Sanders, and antiestablishment Republicans turned to Donald Trump. Establishment types liked Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush."

Our faith and our politics reflect each other, they mirror each other. The question for us is, which predominates: our politics or our faith?

## **Enter Pope Francis**

On October 24th, Pope Francis gave an address to Jesuit leaders from around the world who have been gathering in Rome to consider the course of the future life and work of the Society of Jesus. To help appreciate more the impact on us of what he was telling them, here is a bit of Jesuit background.

Ignatius' conversion in the sixteenth century, which led to his forming the Jesuit Order, he had as a layman. The spirituality of the Jesuits, i.e., "*following Jesus*," is therefore a lay spirituality open to everyone, no matter one's work or status in life.

Why am I bringing this up? Because what Francis said to the Jesuits in Rome he is equally saying to us here at St. Mary. Jesuit / Lay Spirituality means: "(1) We, as Church, are to go to places where others do not reach - spiritually, if not geographically. (2) Spiritual profit is not individualistic, it is for the common good. Ignatius used to say if anyone wanted to join his "least society" to save his own soul, let him look elsewhere. (3) Doing works of mercy – caring for the sick, sharing our resources, helping refugees, even patient suffering - are the daily bread of our faith. (4) Console the people of God so that the enemy of human nature does not rob them of their joy: the joy of life, the joy of family, the joy of creation. (5) The Lord sends us out to bring mercy to the poorest, to sinners, to those discarded people, and those crucified in the present world who suffer injustice and violence."

## **All Saints Day and the Election Day**

This weekend, we celebrate All Saints Day. This is also two weekends away from Election Day. Religion and politics reflect each other; they mirrored by each other. How we live our faith reflects how we will vote, and how we will vote reflects how we live our faith.

The question this is asking each of us then is:

*Am I following the coming elections as a Democrat or Republican, or as a Catholic committed to our faith, our families, and the common good?*

**Happy All Saints Day, Everyone!**