



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

November 3, 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we approach the conclusion of the 2016 Presidential election season, we must not become disillusioned or desensitized because we are disappointed by the choices set before us. This year, many good-intentioned people feel lost in a sea of lies, deceit, corruption and character flaws created in the swell of sensationalism and political strategy. Some will seek other options and some may even be tempted not to vote at all, but we must act on this civic duty.

Whatever you do this November 8, please know that our best decisions are guided by faith and steeped in prayer. We are inundated with facts and figures from political pundits on both sides of the political aisle, and even in other less visible arenas. I ask that you seek truth — step outside the confines of the constant media feeds and pray about this election and for the candidates, particularly.

We are members of a community of faith with a long tradition of teaching and action on human life, marriage and family, justice and peace, care for creation and the common good. As citizens, we have a duty to participate in framing the discussion of public issues and the selection of those in leadership. Participation in elections requires careful discernment in light of our moral principles and faith. As faithful citizens, our decisions in the voting booth should respect the interest of all, particularly those members of our society who are weak and marginalized. As Catholics we cannot participate in this election without taking the issues of abortion and assisted suicide into account.

Our conscience is more than a quiet voice within that we can ignore. It should speak loudly and provide a constant moral foundation that guides our thoughts and actions. We have a duty to properly form our conscience and study the issues before us. It is impossible to advance the cause for the common good without acknowledging and defending the right to life. Without the right to life, all other inalienable rights of individuals cannot exist.

Our faithful witness is an urgent need and essential service not just to the Catholic community but to the human family. This election is about much more than divisive politics. The vice of pride and selfishness has permeated our culture and it is we, the Easter people, who must remind those around us that the true path to happiness is doing God's will. Our culture wants to constantly blame someone else for the ills of society, for the broken system, for the fallen world, however, we must start by looking in the mirror and strive for true holiness.

Imagine a public square abandoned by Christians — who would be there to stand for the weak, vulnerable, poor, and the unborn? If we want to change the trajectory of our nation, we must contest in public debates and in the voting booth. We must continue to strive towards sainthood and continue to strive for virtue. Let your faith shine forth, let the community know you are Christian from the sweat

on your brow and your sincere desire for sainthood. We alone cannot change the world, but with the Lord, we can change the face of our nation and evangelize this society back from the depths of division and despair.

Let us remember that our family, the domestic church, is important to the future of our nation and the Church. We must focus on our own shortcomings as individuals and strive for excellence in our home and communities. As St. Thomas More said, “the ordinary acts we practice every day at home are of more importance to the soul than their simplicity might suggest.” The daily activities that further develop your faith and the faith of those around you will continue to be a beacon of hope in this torn culture. Do not be afraid of sainthood. With the Lord, we can be a better, stronger, and more evangelistic Easter people.

May the peace of the Lord comfort you and keep you in these next few weeks. Let us pray together for the salvation of souls and the recommitment to faith of our neighbors and nation.

In the Lord's Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Guglielmo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmo
Bishop of the Diocese of Charleston