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Pastoral Reflections on the Election Cycle

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Pastoral Reflections on the Election Cycle

Abstract

"We don't despair because whoever becomes our next president will simply be one more ruler under the sovereignty of God."

Posting about the upcoming presidential election from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/pastoral-reflections-on-the-election-cycle/>

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Pastoral Reflections on the Election Cycle

 [all in allthings.org/pastoral-reflections-on-the-election-cycle/](http://allthings.org/pastoral-reflections-on-the-election-cycle/)

September 27, 2016

Mark Verbruggen

As “the Day” approaches many Americans are worried, discouraged, and even angry. How did it come to this? How did these two people become our primary choices for the next president of the United States? The day I am speaking about is Election Day: November 8, 2016. The two choices on that day are: Hilary Clinton or Donald Trump. If all goes according to the way it should, one of them will be elected President of the United States. I’ve not spoken to anybody who is excited about this election as most people would rather vote “none of the above” rather than choose one of these two presidential candidates. I saw a T-shirt that said, “America: designed by geniuses to be run by idiots.” Ouch! But many people would agree with this statement in light of what’s coming on November 8. It was George Bernard Shaw who was credited with saying, “He knows nothing and he thinks he knows everything. That points clearly to a political career.”

And so we find entitlement and narcissism, among many other character traits, fueling the campaign these two widely unpopular presidential candidates. They represent the only two major political parties in our nation and one of them will go on to win. We can heap all sorts of well-deserved criticism on either of them; we can predict an apocalyptic future under either a Hilary or Trump administration; we can collectively dread the coming results on November 8, 2016.

As Christians maybe we should be looking beyond November 8 to another date in this calendar year : November 20, 2016. On this day Christians around the world will be observing what is called on the Christian calendar: “Christ the King Sunday.” A mere 12 days after Election Day, the liturgical calendar invites the Christian church to remember and believe the most subversive, world changing truth that has ever invaded this world’s time and space – Christ is King!

Many people do not know about this observance that takes place on the Sunday before the start of the Advent season. We are too busy getting ready to celebrate Thanksgiving and later Christmas. However, this other day is a gift to the church from Pope Pius XI in 1925. In the establishment of this observance he wrote, *“The faithful, moreover, by meditating upon these truths, will gain much strength and courage, enabling them to form their lives after the true Christian ideal. If to Christ our Lord is given all power in heaven and on earth; if all men, purchased by his precious blood, are by a new right subjected to his dominion; if this power embraces all men, it must be clear that not one of our faculties is exempt from his empire.”*

Pope Pius XI went on to say that Christ must reign over our minds, our wills, our hearts, and our bodies. This truth ought to bring us comfort even if we find ourselves despairing of the upcoming election. Christ will never be dethroned and the Kingdom of God will never be defeated. A truth that might seem so self-evident to us, is a truth that we must always hear again and again. We like to believe that we are the rulers over our own little empires of work, family and school. In many places the Christian church has become insular. We pledge allegiance to a lot of sub-empires and forget that the one true empire is the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is much bigger than our own lives, our churches, our state, and our nation.

If November 8 is a worry to you, change your focus and look to November 20.¹ Unfortunately many Christian congregations have shed the liturgical rhythm of the Christian Year and no longer observe Christian holidays except for “fun” ones (i.e. Christmas and Easter). But take heart, observed or not observed, Christ is still King! In a vision the prophet Daniel saw ahead to this great truth and he says, *“I saw one like a Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and all his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.”* (Daniel 7:13-14)

We don't despair because whoever becomes our next president will simply be one more ruler under the sovereignty of God. Whether or not he or she acknowledges this fact is irrelevant. Our nation has existed under the leadership of many presidents, some who are considered great, others not so much. Our nation is bigger and more stable than the office of the president and the man or woman who happens to be there for a given time. Just remember, you cannot and you need not legislate the Kingdom of God into existence because Christ has already made it a reality. Election 2016 will come and go but Revelation 11:15 says, *"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever."*