

**“Election Booth or Church Pew?”****October 21, 2016****By Mary McClusky**

I recently attended events where family members expressed two very different attitudes toward living our Catholic faith in an uncertain age. One family member expressed doom and despair for our culture as we careen toward Election Day results. She feared that attacks on unborn life, marriage, religious liberty, and the dignity of women would grow worse if voters elected the wrong people. The other family member spent time delighting in her grandchildren, thanking my husband and me for our pro-life work, and sharing how she faithfully drove to Mass every morning to pray.

Both women know the importance of allowing their faith to guide and inspire the choices in their lives. Both know it is vital to bring our faith into the voting booth in our efforts to end abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia and to protect women, children and families. Yet one demonstrated how a focus on prayer, gratitude and joy offers hope for changing a culture.

Do we place our faith, hope, and trust primarily in results from the voting booth or in the Lord’s whispers heard in the church pew?

It has been a difficult and divisive time in our country. As we struggle to unite in seeking solutions on a wide variety of issues, consider focusing not on *November 8*, but on *December 8*, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. St. John Paul II’s devotion to our Blessed Mother inspired him to seek Jesus’ help through her intercession. May he inspire men and women alike to turn to her as the perfect model of faithfulness, strength, and courage in all things. This devotion is also appropriate because the U.S. bishops declared Mary to be the Patroness of the United States of America under the title of the Immaculate Conception.

Remember that Mary, under the title Our Lady of Guadalupe, helped heal the suffering of the Mexican people and convert millions. If Mary can bring about the conversion of a whole nation, consider her powerful help in converting those who promote or provide abortions to leave the abortion industry and turn to the Lord’s boundless mercy and healing embrace.

Still not convinced in the power of prayer? Note that dedicated and persistent on-site prayer campaigns have been vital in helping to close down Planned Parenthood and other abortion facilities across the country.

On the *World Day of Peace* in 1997, St. John Paul II said, “Let us never forget that everything passes, and only the eternal can fill the heart.” Regardless of election results, Jesus Christ is always our salvation and provides our hope. While being faithful citizens, we can bend our knees in prayer, raise our eyes to the cross, and fix our gaze on Jesus, allowing Him to fill our hearts with faith, hope, and love. And, like Our Lady, let us always remember to trust in God’s plan for our country, and remain a light to all we meet.

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