

A Pastoral Address from the Bishop  
January 8, 2020

As we hear and watch the news of the moment, our unfortunate reality is that once again we are engaged in armed international hostilities. While reflecting upon this situation it is all too easy to default to the emotions of all too quickly formed conclusions and anticipations. Often that means that we will appeal to a combination of anger and fear. In 1861 during his inaugural address to our nation President Abraham Lincoln, seeing that the country was as well at the brink of hostilities, then a time of conflict which ultimately would pit states against states and even brothers against brothers, asked the members of our country to appeal to our "...better angels."<sup>1</sup> When the dark clouds of such hostilities are on the horizon, it is well for people of faith to be reminded that we follow a different way; a way of faith in God that beckons us to rise above vengefulness to way of our better angels.

While our inclinations for revenge and retaliation are wholly natural responses, as persons whom the Apostle Paul described as people of "...the way..."<sup>2</sup> of Christ Jesus, we are called to an extraordinary and different response. In 1963, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Rome wrote a letter to the church entitled "Pacem in Terris (Peace Upon Earth)." While the backdrop of this letter, the global nuclear arms race, was a different setting than what we face today, the bishop offered what I believe are some very applicable thoughts. For one thing, the letter was addressed to "...all men of good will."<sup>3</sup> The Bishop believed that all men and women of God's creation had the infused spiritual capability to rise above partisanship and join in the pursuit of peace upon earth. Accordingly, the Bishop of Rome challenged people of faith to be both-and-citizens of the countries and states in which they lived: full faithfulness and full citizenship. They were called to be people of prayer whose constant supplication was for peace and thoughtful decisions for the good of all of God's children. Simultaneously, they were called to be citizens who were fully engaged in the affairs of their nation. Our Christian mission is to be both followers of the risen Lord Jesus and to be citizens involved in the public life of our country.

Considering the heavy military concentration within the confines of our diocese, this is a particularly poignant moment in our lives. As a retired career service member I have great empathy for service members and service families who must bear the heavy weight of this burden. To them and to all of us I ask you to be mindful that we are in the hands of a loving and caring God.

In her recent missive to our diocese, Bishop-elect Susan Haynes implored us to a daily rule wherein we faithfully read our scriptures and offer our prayers. As individual Christ-followers and corporately as members of the body of Christ, this is a time when we need

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.the-american-interest.com/2019/07/04/better-angels-in-our-past/>. Accessed January 08, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 9:2, NSRV.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html).

Accessed January 08, 2020.

to be so engaged. Accordingly, for your individual and corporate worship usage I commend these prayers adapted and taken from The Book of Common Prayer (1979):

Eternal God, in your perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love. So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one God of all people. Guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Almighty and loving God, your Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth; deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

O Lord our Governor, whose glory is in all the world: We commend our nation to your merciful care, that, being guided by your Providence, we may dwell secure in your peace. Grant to the President of the United States, and to all in authority, wisdom and strength to know and to do your will. Fill them with the love of truth and righteousness, and make them ever mindful of their calling to serve this people in your fear; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

Brothers and sisters, go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://books.apple.com/us/book/book-of-common-prayer/id573989674>.

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