



The Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina

The Right Reverend Robert S. Skirving, Bishop

October 29, 2020

Dear Friends,

As a moment in time, Election Day seems to have lost much of its meaning. Many people, if not most, will have voted well ahead of the first Tuesday of November. We are hearing that it will take some length of time beyond Election Day for all ballots to be counted. Even more significant is the reality that the acrimony of our present times is not likely to disappear once election results have been settled. That's why I have chosen to wait and write to you about life beyond Election Day, rather than writing to you some time ago about the election itself.

The gospel readings proclaimed these last two Sundays have been powerful. On October 18th we heard the story of Jesus looking at a Roman coin with those testing him to see whose image and title were represented on it. Seeing that it was the emperor, Jesus responded with these words, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (from Matthew 22:15-22 NRSV) On October 25th we heard Jesus tested again, this time with the question of which commandment in the law was the greatest. The words of his response will be familiar to us all. He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (from Matthew 22:34-46 NRSV)

What about each of us? What image does each of us bear? When others look at us, do they first see one who belongs to God and follows Jesus, or do they see one who belongs to a particular political party? By our words and our actions, how do we present ourselves to the world? And how do we see each other? Do we see each and every other person as a neighbor, loving them as we love ourselves, no matter how different we might be from one another and regardless of the political perspectives we each hold?

The mission of the Church, as defined in our Catechism, is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (BCP, p. 855) Regardless of whom we eventually elect as our leaders, as we prepare for life beyond Election Day let us each consider our own principles and priorities to ensure that they express and reveal that we have been "marked as Christ's own for ever" in baptism. (BCP, p. 308) And let us choose to see every person we meet as a neighbor whom God calls us to love, even when we may have voted differently from one another. Our mission as the Church demands no less!

Yours in Christ,

Robert S. Skirving

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