

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Several years ago, I was in Washington, DC for the March for Life. I forget which year it was, but it was right before the Presidential Primaries in New Hampshire. A “wandering” reporter was trying to get stories from different people about the March. She spoke with me, and we discussed much about the March for Life, our group from New Hampshire, and our trip down. When she found out I was from New Hampshire, she asked my thoughts about the primaries. Politics and I do not mix well, and I remember responding something along the lines of, “I’m just glad that that chaos will be done soon!”

And that’s what got printed in the newspaper.

Here we are, gearing up for yet another New Hampshire primary. I don’t watch television, and I try to limit my time online, but even I can tell this is going to be one whopper of a primary season. Many times, we think that politics and religion should not mingle. This may be a result of too many arguments and even wars over religion throughout the centuries – but then again, politics is pretty emotionally charged, too! At the heart of this separation – I think, anyway – is the misguided understanding of religion as a personal, private matter. The reality is that God is not just something we think in our minds – He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He created all of humanity, and each human in particular, and so God is not something separate from politics, but someone who cares deeply about each choice that is made for a people – an individual, a community, a state, a nation.

This all being said, I’m not writing to endorse one candidate or another, one party or another. As I said, I don’t do well with politics! Rather, I want to bring our attention to the second reading for this weekend. St. Paul is writing to St. Timothy, a young bishop whom he mentored. He writes:

I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone, for kings and for all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity. This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth. (I Timothy 2:1-4)

Paul is writing to Timothy in a time when Christianity was under attack. In the early church, if Christians were caught, they were forced to worship false gods (offer incense to the gods and/or the emperor), or lose everything, be tortured, exiled, or killed – or all of the above. Yet Paul writes that we are to pray for all those in authority. He was saying to pray even for the “Neros” in authority.

In this time of political division, we have the same responsibility. We may not like our political leaders. We may think they are *all* a bunch of buffoons – yet, the Christian is to pray for them, and to offer thanksgivings for them! Can you believe that?!

Why? St. Paul says it is because God desires “**everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth**” (I Timothy 2:4). It is for their conversion, to know the love and the saving power of Jesus, and so to act justly, rightly, and in truth. Wouldn’t that be great to have politicians who spoke and acted truth?! (I’m sorry... that was a cheap shot!) The prayers of the early Christians were effective. We don’t know the state of the souls of the Roman Emperors (or anyone else, for that matter), but we know that by 313, the Roman government had become open enough to Christianity to recognize it as a licit religion – thereby making it legal to be Christian.

We don’t always see the results of our prayers, but do we trust that God really hears them? Even for our country and our politicians? I encourage you to offer up prayers every day for our local, state and national leaders, after all, they need the prayers more than ever. And always remember, it is not the President, the Congress, or any other human person who is in charge of this world. GOD IS. Trust Him. Trust His love.