

Sunday, February 14, 2016

## Temptations of the Election Cycle

1st Sunday of Lent

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/021416.cfm>

Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Romans 10:8-13

Luke 4:1-13

It seems that all election cycles begin with voters bemoaning the lackluster candidates running for office. If this year's candidates appear to be more mockable than ever, they are at least [generating record turnout](#) and [voter interest](#).

Election years provide an opportunity to take the pulse of the nation. More than at any other time, our hopes and fears are on display. And with them, the temptations we are susceptible to as a country.

Just as Satan tempted Jesus to turn stones to bread, we are tempted to measure the health of our nation in economic terms. [Jobs and business growth](#) always top most lists of voter concerns.

The [current state of our economy](#) is a mixed bag of a declining unemployment rate, lower gas prices, and rising real estate values alongside weak exports and a nosediving stock market. However, are leading economic indicators the only way to gauge our nation's health? What does the [growing scourge of heroin addiction](#) have to say about how our young people view this country's future? What does the [increasing push to legalize euthanasia](#) say about how we treat the sick and how our elderly citizens view their healthcare options? When we turn the focus to the poorest and most vulnerable among us, we avoid the temptation to measure progress in dollars and cents.

The other temptation we fall prey to is pitting one group of citizens against another. This tendency has created some of the most memorable clichés in recent history whether it be the [vilification of the top one percent of wage earners](#) or the rhetorical Wall Street/Main Street juxtaposition. We have divided the country into camps—Democrat and Republican, conservative and liberal, red state and blue state. Even within those same camps members argue about who is most conservative or most authentically progressive. Everyone must pick a side. Though we pay lip service to consensus and bipartisanship, in the end the political process is about one side imposing its agenda on the other. Rather than build a culture of solidarity, we are more fragmented than ever.



Finally, perhaps the greatest temptation of all is to be so [disillusioned with politics](#) that we not get involved at all. If we at least could manage some outrage at the state of politics in our country we might be able to start a meaningful reform movement, but [most Americans are too indifferent to even show up to vote](#). It could be caused by distrust of the media. It could be that the hectic pace of modern life leaves no time to worry about anything other than family and work. Or it could be that people, for the sake of their sanity, cannot bear the rancor of political debate. However, the disengagement of so many voters has left a void that special interests are all too happy to fill while leaving ordinary citizens feeling increasingly powerless.

In this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus gives us the antidote to these temptations: "It is written: You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve." When we worship God, we become better citizens. We put money at the service of people rather than people at the service of money. Motivated by love of neighbor, we do not consider those who view the world differently than we do as enemies but rather as sisters and brothers. Our political involvement becomes a response to Jesus' call to service rather than a means of dominating others. And our conviction that true peace and justice will only be fully achieved in the world to come helps us to overcome the disillusionment and frustration of having to negotiate lesser evils and tolerate less than perfect solutions. All the while we insist on having the freedom to practice our faith not because we want to dominate others or impose an agenda on them but because we are convinced that it will make our country a better place that values every human life and gives everyone the opportunity to reach the American dream.

*Douglas Sousa, STL*

## NOTICES

### LENTEN RESOURCES FOR PARISHES AND INDIVIDUALS

The USCCB offers special resources for Lent on its [website](#). From there you can download the Pope Francis' Lenten message in this Year of Mercy and the US Bishops' pastoral letter on the sacrament of penance, "God's Gift of Forgiveness," as well as other great resources.

In addition to its other resources for Lent, the USCCB is offering "40 Days of Mercy," an online calendar for the season of Lent with daily activities and meditations. You will want to share this information with parish members, school and religious education staffs, and other interested parties. The online calendar can be found at: <http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/liturgical-year/lent/lent-calendar.cfm>.

### LENTEN COVERS FOR LPi PRINTING PARTNERS

LPi has created an exclusive series of bulletin covers for the Lenten season and Easter. The covers are available to LPi printing partners at no cost on our Art & Media Portal; just search keyword "[Lent 2016](#)". Lenten covers and banners are also available for purchase [here](#).

### LENT AND CRS RICE BOWL

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 10, and Catholic Relief Services is again offering its successful Lenten action program, CRS Rice Bowl, to parishes. If you haven't yet ordered your supplies, or if you want to find out the very latest on the great resources available, visit: [www.CRSricebowl.org/](http://www.CRSricebowl.org/). Bulletin resources for CRS Rice Bowl are also available on the LPi Art & Media Portal at [www.Portal.4LPi.com](http://www.Portal.4LPi.com); search keyword "[Rice Bowl](#)".

## PRAYER

*AO God, we acknowledge You today as Lord,  
Not only of individuals, but of nations and governments.*

*We thank You for the privilege  
Of being able to organize ourselves politically  
And of knowing that political loyalty  
Does not have to mean disloyalty to You.*

*We thank You for Your law,  
Which our Founding Fathers acknowledged  
And recognized as higher than any human law.  
We thank You for the opportunity that this election year  
puts before us,  
To exercise our solemn duty not only to vote,  
But to influence countless others to vote,  
And to vote correctly.*

*Lord, we pray that Your people may be awakened.  
Let them realize that while politics is not their  
salvation,  
Their response to You requires that they be politically  
active.*

*Awaken Your people to know that they are not called to be  
a sect fleeing the world  
But rather a community of faith renewing the world.*

*Awaken them that the same hands lifted up to You in prayer  
Are the hands that pull the lever in the voting booth;  
That the same eyes that read Your Word  
Are the eyes that read the names on the ballot,  
And that they do not cease to be Christians  
When they enter the voting booth.*

*Awaken Your people to a commitment to justice,  
To the sanctity of marriage and the family,  
To the dignity of each individual human life,  
And to the truth that human rights begin when Human Lives  
Begin,  
And not one moment later.*

*Lord, we rejoice today  
That we are citizens of Your kingdom.*

*May that make us all the more committed  
To being faithful citizens on earth.*

*We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.*

*Amen.*

*- A Prayer for our Nation's Election, from Catholic Online,  
<http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=649>*

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