

## Pastoral Letter to the Community of the Gospel Regarding Politics

Dear Community,

1. The 5-4-17 Executive Order by President Donald Trump appears to open the doors for religious organizations to express political opinions without any adverse actions from the Treasury Department or other agencies, provided it occurs within a religious context. In particular, the key line in the Order is:

"All executive departments and agencies (agencies) shall, to the greatest extent practicable and to the extent permitted by law, respect and protect the freedom of persons and organizations to engage in religious and political speech."

2. Per the restrictions in our Constitution, however, the Community of the Gospel, or any of its members *in the name of the Community*, will NOT endorse or oppose any political candidate, nor will we, as a Community, make any specifically *political* statements. Members may do so as individuals, but without connections to the Community.

3. It is important to note that any religious organization that redirects their attention from sharing the sacraments or in solely promoting, teaching, or creating further understanding of Gospel wisdom and love, and who reverts to supporting, or opposing, specific political candidates is destined to add to the already great polarization within this nation and world. It also carries with it the great potential of destroying the organization itself, since few religious organizations consist a single political perspective. Having many members of the Community, we reflect many different understandings of this political moment.

4. Our role as a monastic community is to continuously raise political issues to a higher level of consciousness based on Gospel love, wisdom, equity, and interconnectedness – removing these issues from the political arena to that of loving one another. Our members, and hopefully those with whom we meet, will extrapolate from Christ's presence and teachings a proper political course upon which she or he may act. *We encourage our members to get involved in today's world, national, and local issues* as part of their vow of service, but to do so only based on God's love for each other, His creatures, and the world.

5. Our members work together to better understand the Gospel so that we may prepare ourselves to fulfill our vow of service. We gradually come to know, love, and serve the Lord in many unique ways – social action, family care, animal care, prayer, art, etc. – all are needed! There is much that needs to be done in the world, and we have all been given unique talents, interests, and gifts to evoke needed change.

6. Jesus worked to change the hearts of people, while at the same time confronting unjust social systems. Our Community is designed to this end. Changing the laws of a nation, state, or local governmental units certainly helps to correct social inequities, but the hearts of the people must change as well. Both approaches are necessary in these times.

7. We must spend time in prayer and reflective study to strengthen and shape our service to others. There is an important balance required between action and contemplation. Our vows are designed to offer this balance.

8. In summary, we will avoid endorsing or opposing any political candidate *as a Community*. However, individually and as a Community, we will vigorously pursue our Baptismal vows that call us to strive for social justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

We will, with God's help.

Blessings,

Br Daniel-Joseph Schroeder, Founder and Guardian

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Updated and endorsed by Br Daniel-Chad Hoffman, Guardian, 8-20-20