



Civil Discourse for the Common Good

You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief aim of all politics.

-- Pope Francis, Address to the US Congress, September 24, 2015

We live in a world increasingly marked by hatred, brutality, and violent conflict. We see our own country threatened by increasing disparities in economic, political, and social power. We are caught in a political system paralyzed by ideological extremism and hyper-partisanship. Those on both sides of the growing political divide too often appeal to our basest instincts and stoke the fires of fear that threaten to tear the fabric of our nation apart. We cannot let the voices of hatred and fear carry the day.

We call for a return to civility in our discourse and decency in our political interaction that promotes the common good, reaches out to others, engages in constructive dialogue, and seeks together the way forward. We hope for political dialogue that reflects the principles and values upon which this nation was founded.

The need for courageous leaders has never been greater. We simply ask that all refrain from language that disrespects, dehumanizes, or demonizes another. All are created in God's image and are worthy of respect. We ask that all who seek to influence public opinion, all who hope to serve this nation as leaders, be always mindful of the common good and respectful of the dignity of each and every person.

Citizens of this pluralistic nation form a diverse polity characterized by a wide variety of beliefs, experiences, and interests. Disagreements and differences of opinion have the potential to challenge all of us to abandon easy certainty and seek a fuller truth. The problem is not our many disagreements. It is how those conflicts are handled that spells the difference between building the common good and destroying the bonds that bind this nation together.

In his address to the US Congress last September, Pope Francis invited members of Congress to promote respect for the dignity of every human person and to renew their commitment to a spirit of cooperation. He also addressed each of us and all who seek to lead this nation when he said,

Each son or daughter of a given country has a mission, a personal and social responsibility . . . You are called to defend and preserve the dignity of your fellow citizens in the tireless and demanding pursuit of the common good, for this is the chief

aim of all politics. A political society endures when it seeks, as a vocation, to satisfy common needs by stimulating the growth of all its members, especially those in situations of greater vulnerability or risk . . . Building a future of freedom requires love of the common good and cooperation in a spirit of subsidiarity and solidarity.

Let us engage in careful listening and honest questioning. Let us honor the dignity of those with whom we disagree and treat them with the respect that is their God-given right. Let us seek the common good, desire only good for all others, and offer our own truth with equal measures of conviction and humility.



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