

Outreach Conference 2020

Sharing Political Views: Fr. John Hogg

Synopsis: A presentation on parish information and the importance of it.

1. Introduction – Why our approach to politics matters as much as our opinion
2. General principles
3. Additional Resources

Section 1: Introduction - Why our approach to politics matters as much as our opinion

1. It should come as no surprise to anyone that we live in a world that is increasingly divided and divisive. It is no longer just a matter of us having disagreements with each other and our neighbors over politics. Increasingly, we are unable even to discuss those disagreements in a calm and loving way. Disagreement leads to personal animosity. Or, if people try to avoid animosity, they often fall into relativism instead, and become indifferent to the truth.
2. Christ says that a tree is known by its fruit, for good and for ill. If our actions and conduct are no different than that of the people around us, such that people can't tell by our words or actions that we are Christians, then what good is it for us to have the “right” opinion on all the political issues of the day?
3. It's not by how we treat our friends and those who agree with us that our faith is tested but by how we treat our enemies, opponents, and those we disagree with. As Christians, we should be the first to be kind, civil, and seek common ground, not succumbing to tribalism or scheming, but seeking the virtues and trusting in Christ, rather than in parties, personalities, or politicians.

Section 2: General principles

1. Whether or not we like and agree with our leaders, we should always pray for them. St. Paul tells us: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions... be made... for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way." We should always pray for their health and safety and that God would give them success in every good deed. Christians prayed for Nero. We can and should pray for our leaders.
2. We should distinguish between people and policy. While we do have an obligation to work for what is good and can speak out against bad or unjust policies, we need to do so respectfully. St. Peter tells us to “honor the emperor,” even though the emperor at the time was a violent persecutor of the Church. St. Jude, likewise, makes clear that we should be careful of how we speak of those in authority. So, while we advocate for good policies, we should avoid derogatory nicknames, caricatures, insulting memes, etc.
3. We should avoid the tendency to idolize our leaders. A quirk of our system is that the only people who end up with power are people that think that they **should** have power, which is always a little bit dangerous. In order to get elected, politicians have to build a following around themselves. As Christians, we should avoid participating in that kind of hope. Even if we agree with politicians, we should avoid putting our trust in “princes and sons of men.” Christ is our hope!
4. When talking to other people, we should always assume the best whenever possible. We should avoid any gossip or slander or any unproven conspiracy theories. We should listen to

others with an open mind and look for areas of common ground. When we must disagree (as we often must), we should do so calmly and rationally, without bitterness or mocking of our opponent. We should treat others like someone for whom Christ died, even if they're wrong about an important issue that we feel passionate about.

5. We should remember that we have a natural tendency to be quick to excuse the mistakes and scandals of "our side" and to magnify and exaggerate those of the "other side." We should work to do the opposite -- hold ourselves to a higher standard and be forgiving of the mistakes of others, giving them more of a benefit of the doubt than we give ourselves.
6. Before deciding whom to vote for, we should approach the decision seriously and pray to God for wisdom, since, despite what we each secretly think about ourselves, we're not always as smart as we think that we are and if we want to use our responsibilities as citizens well, we need to ask God for wisdom and guidance.

Any questions? Contact me at frjohnhogg@gmail.com