

My Dear Friends in Christ,

One of the most contentious and divisive elections in recent memory is now behind us. And, like many communities around our nation, our Catholic parishes at times succumbed to its negative effects. Now, we and all people of good will must forge ahead. Before us still loom serious pro-life and social justice issues in our society that impact the very lives and dignities of those whom we are called to love. Examples include the unborn victims of abortion and the pregnant mothers in crisis who need help; people of faith whose religious liberties are threatened; families not treated as the most important institution of our society; those seeking decent jobs and the poor surviving off our safety nets; migrants trampled down by a broken immigration system; victims of war and terrorism around the globe; and the environment that sustains us all.

As members of all political parties, active in a variety of ministries in our parishes, schools, and religious communities, Catholics must advocate tirelessly on such issues. As St. Paul explained to us long ago, we are many members yet one body in Christ (1 Cor. 12). And though we may have disagreements about how we go about the details of this work, we must affirm each other as we each do our part to build God's Kingdom of life and dignity for everyone. We must remain determined and passionate, but we must pursue our work with civility and respect if we are to attract anyone towards the truth we are trying to communicate.

Finally, I am full of a sense of hope for this coming Advent, when we will launch our "Catholics Come Home" initiative to reach out to those who have drifted away from our Church. I can think of no better way for our returning brothers and sisters to feel a sense of welcome than to experience a community of faith that puts love, charity and reconciliation above all else, especially after such a polarizing time in our nation. Let us each take responsibility for ensuring that our Eucharistic tables provide both a refuge from such storms and a vocation to bring Christ's love out into the world. Then our parishes can more effectively give the hearts of our returning Catholics the Good News they still long to receive.

In thanksgiving for all you do to help make this a brilliant Year of Faith, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr  
Archbishop of Cincinnati