

Nov. 6, 2020
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I was preparing this reflection on Nov. 3, Election Day, grateful for the Morning Prayer for Peace and the distraction of a task. No matter the outcome, or even if we know it by now, the Scriptures for today are here for our pondering. As well, there are present and past prophetic voices that call us to be good citizens of our country and beyond, for the Common Good of all people and for our Earth.

The letter to the Philippians could not be clearer. There are attitudes and behaviors that are anti-Gospel, anti-community, anti-personhood. How current to our experience.

Yet the broader, hopeful view claims, Christ “will change us ...” to be his body. So Paul admonishes us to ... “stand firm in the Lord.”

We certainly do need to find ways to stand firm these coming weeks and months. Jesus warns us: “The children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than the children of light.”

Along this line, here are sobering words from the Detroit newspaper columnist and author, Mitch Albom. I am quoting bits from his long pre-election article this past Sunday (Nov. 1).

“Well, here is some breaking news: the struggle isn’t going away ... We will eventually have a freshly elected president, but he’ll be presiding over the same nation, the same people, the same congress, the same media and the same disagreements. We have acted as if this is the first time liberal and conservatives have clashed, the first time race or police have been issues, the first time we’ve faced a health pandemic. None of that is true.

“And all of these things will repeat themselves in the future. In fact, they are all still here, smack in our face, come Wednesday morning. How will *we* be any different? The truth is our future won’t be determined by who we choose to lead us this week. It will be determined by how *we* act after we do.

“The president is a representative, nothing more. What will he represent? What will *we* represent? Who will *we* be on Wednesday, Thursday and beyond? Know this: if the winners gloat and the losers threaten, we won’t be any better (going forward) than we’ve been the last six months.”

Here is another voice. Now from a Gospel point of view, Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller comments on today’s readings.

“We are asked to reflect upon the *attitude* with which we act. ... All too frequently we ... distract ourselves from any serious consideration about our *motives* or about the *source of our strength*, even about the *purpose and result* of our excessive activity ... Paul

surrendered to the Spirit and so acted as Christ's minister ... and (he) turned repeatedly to the Holy Spirit for assistance and guidance." (*Biblical Meditations* pp. 196-7)

Questions from the Gospel arise:

How can *we*, as "children of the light" *be* more prudent than the "children of this world" in dealing with our generation?

Who have you been reading or listening to that is "of the Light?"

What *discipline* of thought, word or action, what discipline will you practice, to respect the *dignity of each person* you are in contact with (in whatever way)?

At the Election Day prayer service, a quote from John Newell on Gandhi struck me as vital.

"Gandhi said, 'I refuse to regard anyone as my enemy.' ...
So Gandhi distinguished between two kinds of force.
There was brute force, he said, and there is love-force ...
love force, or soul force as he also called it,
can change the heart and the will of an entire nation."

Where do you want to *be firm* in your standing? What *choice* will you make of how to BE these days?

Peace be with you, with us all.

Amen.