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## A Call for Prayer, Humility, and Listening: Our election aftermath

By Ted Penton, S.J., J.D.\*

I expected Election Week to be challenging, but I didn't expect that I'd be reduced to tears.

Many aspects of Trump's presidency have long frustrated me. But to see an American President publicly call for election officials to stop counting ballots—this took things to another level. That he simultaneously called to continue counting votes in states where he was behind added an element of farce while in no way diminishing the tragedy. I wanted to laugh but found myself crying.



Photo by Mike Labrum on Unsplash

I know I was not the only one caught off-guard. Despite the profound divisions in the country, I hoped and believed that at a deeper level there was still a widely shared commitment to our core values, to our democracy.

As a Catholic I find it difficult to support either of the major parties. How do I support a party whose greatest "achievements" over the past four years are tax cuts for the wealthy, rollbacks of environmental regulations, and the dismantling of our asylum system? On the other hand, how do I back a party which opposes protections for the unborn, offers little support for religious education, and which for decades passed trade deals that led to huge job losses?

Disagreement is important in a democratic system. That there is no party I can fully support does not mean that I should disengage from the process. On the contrary it means that I need to engage more deeply and creatively, to advance a vision which serves the common good and respects the dignity of all. But despite best efforts, at times the rancor threatens to engulf us.

In this dark time the primary point of hope I see is that, whoever may be in the White House, whoever may control Congress, whoever may sit on the Supreme Court, Jesus is Lord. Surely what we share as Christians runs deeper than what divides us. As tempting as it is to make idols of political figures, they are not the Lord.

Amid such challenges, what are the first steps towards the reconciliation which is so crucial? First, prayer. Very few of us are happy with the election results. Bring that frustration to prayer, lay it before the Lord.

Second, humility. Much of our media has devolved into echo chambers where we only hear voices we agree with, where those who disagree are denigrated as fools or worse. We desperately need to grow in humility, to recognize that none of us holds all the answers, that I have my own blind spots, and that even some of my own beliefs may be mistaken.

Third, we need to listen more deeply to one another, especially to those we disagree with. This doesn't mean subjecting oneself to abuse or name-calling—better simply to walk away from those who can't engage in charitable dialogue. But it does mean actively seeking out, and trying to understand, perspectives different from my own. I may not ultimately adopt their views, but at least I will have a greater understanding of why others might.

This then, is my prayer for the coming weeks and months: may we all spend more time focusing on our shared, fundamental values, may we grow in humility, and may we listen more deeply to one another.

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Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.

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