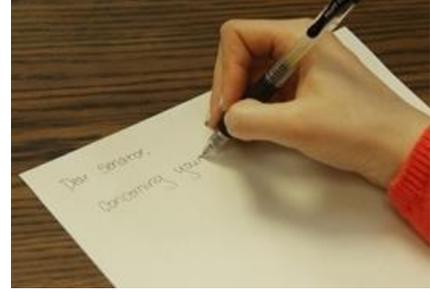


LIGHT AND SALT: VOTING PLUS ONE

Jesus praises his disciples by describing them as light of the world and salt of the earth. “The just man is a light in darkness to the upright” (PS 112:4(a)). But what does this mean to us?

I had never lobbied before, but at the U.S. Catholic Bishops’ annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, D.C., I was expected to participate in the Oregon delegation visits to Capitol Hill. Sitting through a half hour of Advocacy 101 training, and knowing that I could let my fellow Oregon constituents speak, I felt comfortable in the amount of light I would put out.



I arrived in D.C. one day before a massive snowstorm prevented the others from arriving. I was alone.

There was no disappearing now and I knew I would have to be a bigger light. So I over prepared. I stayed up late memorizing the Bishops’ position papers. I jotted down talking points and sprinkled in personal stories from Oregon. I was also assured that we never meet with actual Representatives and I would only be speaking to a member of the staff.

I walked into the foyer of the Dirksen Building and, like St. Paul, I said a prayer to the Holy Spirit. (“I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power” [1 COR 2:3-4].) I walked into Senator Jeff Merkley’s office prepared to meet a staff person. The Senator’s Chief of Staff ushered me into a side office where I was greeted by Senator Merkley himself.

Be the light.

Face-to-face lobbying is the most effective form of advocacy; doing nothing is incredibly ineffective.

Consider this: what if we took one more step. What if we satisfied our civic responsibility – voted – and then took one more step? What if we ensured that “We the People” didn’t become “We the Government?”

One step. Jesus praises his disciples by describing them as light of the world and salt of the earth.

A face-to-face lobbying effort with Senator Merkley might feel uncomfortable (for some of us). Perhaps you’re not meant to be the big light. That’s okay. **Be the salt.**

Only a pinch of salt is necessary to season tonight’s dinner. But necessary it is to avoid a bland meal.

“Plus One” is the salt Jesus talks about: one little thing – after voting – to ensure a moral democracy.

“Plus One”: sign a petition, send an electronic form letter, or make a phone call.

What is it you should advocate for? Our criteria is 1) does it protect human life and dignity; 2) does it promote the common good. Isaiah provides a good start:

- Share your bread with the hungry
- Shelter the oppressed and the homeless
- Clothe the naked when you see them
- Do not turn your back on your own
- Remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech
- Bestow your bread on the hungry
- Satisfy the afflicted

“Then your light shall break forth like the dawn...”
(Readings for the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year A)