

DON'T SPECULATE

History shows that many campaign promises never come to fruition. Some may see that as good news, and others may find this troubling. In any case, it is useless to speculate on what will happen in the future. God only gives you the grace you need for what is happening in the present moment. "What profit comes to the person for all the effort he puts into worrying?" Pope Francis asks.



DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR

A lot of what you hear in the media are opinions that have no basis in fact. In a meeting with journalists earlier this year, Pope Francis recognized that because there is an uninterrupted flow of information and observations being broadcast twenty-four hours a day, "it is not always easy to arrive at the truth, or at least come close to it."

TRUST CHRIST

Don't make the mistake of putting your trust in other people. When we put our trust in Jesus we are never disappointed because he is always there for us. Pope Francis recommends this prayer of entrustment: "Lord I entrust this to you. You help take care of it."



REACH OUT TO OTHERS

One of the best ways to stop focusing on our own concerns is to reach out to people in need. The Catholic Church has always maintained a preferential option for the poor, the weak, the sick, and the marginalized members of our society. Now is a good time to do something for someone else. From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has emphasized reaching out to others. In 2013, he advised, "There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy, and those who suffer, and to favor justice, promote reconciliation, and build peace."



PROMOTE PEACE

Now more than ever, we must be people of peace. We must be kind. We must be merciful. We must show in everything we say and do that we are followers of Jesus Christ who offers us a peace that the world cannot give (see Jn 14:27). "Let us always build peace!" Pope Francis urges, "A peace which grows stronger day by day, a peace which makes itself felt in everyday life, a peace to which each person contributes by seeking to avoid signs of arrogance, hurtful words, contemptuousness, and instead by working to foster understanding, dialogue, and cooperation" (Address, July 10, 2015).

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Love

ONE ANOTHER.



FINDING PEACE

in a

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SHUTTERSTOCK IMAGES



Our country is divided. We are experiencing this division in our workplaces, our schools, our parishes, and even in our extended families. For Catholics and all Christians, the essential question is: What can we do to restore peace in our relationships among people with whom we disagree? How do we follow the central teaching of Jesus Christ to love one another, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34)?

LOVE VERSUS HATE

When we choose love, we recognize that despite our differences we are still sons and daughters of a just and merciful God. We acknowledge that our feelings and opinions may be different from someone else’s, but we treat the other person with respect and courtesy.

When we choose hate, we cut ourselves off from God and from other people. We descend into an attitude

of meanness that results in harsh words and unkind behaviors. In a 2013 meditation on the power of words, Pope Francis explained that when we choose hate, it is not that we are bad but rather that “we are weak and sinful.” He admits

“The world will recognize the disciples of Jesus by the way they love one another. Love, in other words, is the Christian’s identity card, the only valid ‘document’ identifying us as Christians.”

— POPE FRANCIS,
Homily, April 24, 2016

that it is often easier to “resolve a situation with an insult, with slander, or with mud-slinging, rather than with kind words.” However, as Catholics, we are called to kindness.

EXAMINING OUR CONSCIENCES

In the wake of this election and in our current political climate, have we chosen the path of love or the path of hate?

❑ Did we spread gossip or say bad things about others?

“It is necessary to fight against this terrorism of language,” Pope Francis urges, “this terrorism of gossip, of insults, of driving people away with insults or by saying things to them that hurt them in the heart” (World Youth Day, July 27, 2016).



❑ Did we post disparaging things on social media?

“Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between individuals and groups,” Pope Francis cautions. “The digital world is a public square, a meeting place where we can either encourage or demean one another, engage in a meaningful discussion or unfair attacks” (Message, January 24, 2016).



❑ Are we angry or resentful?

“As the saying goes: ‘When you get angry, you lose,’” Pope Francis advises. “Don’t let your heart give in to anger and resentment” (Address, July 12, 2015).



❑ Have we asked for forgiveness from people we have hurt? Have we forgiven those who have hurt us?

“Forgiveness is a grace the Lord gives you,” Pope Francis explains, “forgiving your enemy, forgiving those who have hurt you and those who have done you harm” (World Youth Day, July 27, 2016).



“What Jesus simply said was ... ‘do not speak badly of others, do not belittle them, do not discredit them’; basically we are all walking on the same path.”

— POPE FRANCIS,
Morning meditation,
June 13, 2013

If we recognize that we have strayed from choosing the path of love, we can seek forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. “The forgiveness we receive is not the result of our

own efforts,” Pope Francis explains, “but is the gift of the Holy Spirit reconciling us to God and to each other.”

WHY LOVE MATTERS

For Catholics, loving other people is not optional. Jesus was very clear when he said: “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34-35). Jesus even told us that we need to love — not just the people we know and like but also our enemies (see Lk 6:3-35).



When we choose to love other people we try to see them not as a rival or a threat but as a brother or sister. We may not see eye to eye, but by standing shoulder to shoulder we can build a bridge of unity.

“Bridges unite,” Pope Francis tells us, “and when there is a bridge hatred can go away, because I can hear the other and speak with the other. . . . This is what we must do: make bridges” (World Youth Day, July 27, 2016).



STRIVING FOR UNITY

As Christians, we are called to build unity. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed that we all would be one (see Jn 17:21). “Jesus prays that we will all become part of a great family in which God is our Father, in which all of us are brothers and sisters,” Pope Francis acknowledged in a 2015 homily. “No one is excluded; and this is not about having the same tastes, the same concerns, the same gifts. We are brothers and sisters because God created us out of love and destined us, purely of his own initiative, to be his sons and daughters.”

One way to build unity is to talk and listen to one another to find common ground where we can work together while holding fast to our Catholic beliefs and values.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

PRAY

Take a few moments to sit in silence each day. Pray that God will guide our leaders and help them to unite our country. Pray also for yourself and for the people around you. In a 2014 homily, Pope Francis gave us this prayer: “I ask the Lord for the grace that our hearts might be simple, bright with the truth he gives us, and this way we can be kind, forgiving, understanding with others, bighearted with people, merciful.”

