

Our Alien Citizenship

Peter Mommsen, Editor, The Plough

Dear Reader,

We may be heading for the fall of the West, former British foreign secretary William Hague recently warned. He was referring to November's unexpected election of Donald Trump to the US presidency and to the surge of populist nationalism around the globe. Hague's dismay is shared by many across the political spectrum. Even social conservatives who supported the Republican candidate for fear of a Democratic administration are bracing for turbulent years. Christian progressives lament a vote that both reflected and fueled an ugly turn in American politics – a defeat made bitterer by the knowledge that it was meted out by clear majorities of evangelicals, Protestants, and Catholics. Meanwhile, many of the working-class white voters who handed our next president the election feel that their security and identity are under threat.

It's a moment of anxiety when fear is understandable, even justified. But it is not Christian. The exhortation "Fear not" has served as the predictable springboard for a thousand Christmas sermons. It is also the gospel. As surely as a first-century Jew named Jesus is lord of the universe, God will have the last word on humankind's affairs. Who is in the White House should be as secondary a question to us as the rise of a new Roman emperor was to Peter and Paul.

On January 15, 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Dietrich Bonhoeffer preached to his Berlin congregation against the anxieties then engulfing Europe. For Christians, Bonhoeffer said, to live in fear is not acceptable: "Fear takes away a person's humanity. This is not what the creature made by God looks like.... The Bible, the gospel, Christ, the church, the faith – all are one great battle cry against fear in the lives of human beings." We who believe in Jesus must not fear, because we have heard the glad tidings of the arrival of a new political regime: the kingdom of God. We are patriots for a different homeland.

"Our citizenship is in heaven," the apostle Paul tells us (Phil. 3:20). Dorothy Day, the New Yorker who founded the Catholic Worker movement, took his words literally: she never voted. Her reason, according to her friend Ammon Hennessy, was that she "did not bother to choose between the rival warmongers who sought to run the country," but "voted every day by practicing her ideals against war and the capitalist system which caused war."

We must commit to the messy work of building up real flesh-and-blood church communities.

Dorothy Day was anything but apolitical – she campaigned for women's suffrage and workers' rights, protested militarism, and struggled against racial injustices. Crucially, she did so not despite her faith but because of it. And it was for precisely the same reason that she took no part in electoral partisanship. She had a better, more lasting solution: to express in action Jesus' love to the oppressed, the vulnerable, and the guilty – to build up communities that embodied the kind of life that Jesus taught.

Today more than ever, Day's kind of politics – the politics of an alien citizen – seems to make a lot of sense. This issue of *Plough* seeks to flesh out what it might look like to live accordingly....

To be sure, the Christian is obliged to let himself be put to death rather than to instigate violent insurrection. All the more, he is challenged to combat oppression with every inner resource in the name of Jesus Christ. The Christian has the duty of standing up against all public or private wrong with power and commission and authority, even at the risk of death – just as was the case with John the Baptist and with Jesus himself.

As we face the radical uncertainties of the year ahead, may this fearlessness be ours as well.

Even more urgently, may we get to work building up the body of Christ on earth as a tangible sign of the justice of God's coming kingdom. This cannot remain just a topic for symposia and discussion groups. It means a commitment to the messy work of joining together in real flesh-and-blood church communities. It requires a new way of life.

As the angel told the shepherds of Bethlehem, the "glad tidings of great joy" with which we are entrusted will one day "be unto all peoples." Here, and nowhere else, is a politics to which we can rightly devote our lives and fortunes.

*(Eds note: We sometimes use the excellent articles from **The Plough**, an American pastoral journal to which we subscribe, as reflections for our weekly newsletter. They are of exceptional quality and address contemporary issues in faith and culture. The above editorial in the current issue is very appropriate in a world that seems increasingly unsure for all of us. If you would like to look at **The Plough** further please go to <http://www.plough.com> which has a wide range of excellent material.)*

CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME 2016

Confession: After 10.00 a.m. Mass Saturday 17 th December 2016 and after 10.00 a.m.

Mass Monday 19 th December 2016

Saturday 24 th December 2016

Morning Mass at 10.00 a.m.

Christmas Eve 2016

Vigil Mass commences 6.00 p.m. preceded by carol singing at 5.30 p.m.

First Mass commences 9.00 p.m. preceded by carols at 8.40 p.m. with Parish Choir

Christmas Day 2016

Morning Masses 9.30 a.m., (Family Mass), 11.00 a.m.

THERE IS NO EVENING MASS ON CHRISTMAS DAY

St. Stephen's Day Monday 26 th December 2016

Morning Mass 10.00 a.m.

There will only be one weekday Mass from Monday 26 th December until Friday 30 th December at 10.00 a.m.

Saturday 31 st December Vigil Mass at 6.00 p.m.

Sunday 1 st January Mass at 9.30 a.m., 11.00 a.m.

Monday 2 nd January 2017

Mass at 10.00 a.m. only

Normal weekday Masses resume on Tuesday 3 rd January 2017 at 8.00 a.m., 10.00 a.m. and 12.40 p.m.

Feast of the Epiphany 6 January 2017

Thursday 5 January – Vigil Mass at 6.00 pm

Friday 6 th January – Masses at 8.00

Church Collections.

10th /11th Nov 2016

1st Collection... €1,012

1st Collection... €240 (8th Dec)

Masses on 17th/18th Nov 2016

6pm...Brigid, Mary and Pat Donoghue (Anniversary)

9.30am... Christopher Crean

11am... Pat Dunne (Anniversary)