

Choosing Hope over Fear

Our faith teaches us to choose hope over fear, welcome over exclusion, and love over hate. Formed by our reflection and preparation, may we be moved by compassion and hope to work for justice between now and Election Day.

Acting Boldly for Justice and the Common Good

Easter reminds us that we are a people of hope who celebrate seeing God's love at work. In the joy of the Resurrection, we are emboldened to go out and be that love in the world.

When Pope Francis [addressed Congress](#) in September 2015, he began by saying "Each son or daughter of a given country has a mission, a personal and social responsibility." Throughout the weeks of Lent, we reflected upon the mission that we are called to in these challenging times. Now, we set out to live that mission boldly as Spirit-filled voters.

Boldness is one of the five great expressions of love with particular importance for today's culture named by Pope Francis in "[Gaudete et Exsultate](#)." Pope Francis highlights passion and boldness as an antidote to "negativity and sullenness; self-content bred by consumerism; individualism." He writes that Jesus's compassion, did not "make him hesitant, timid or self-conscious, as often happens with us. Quite the opposite. His compassion made him go out actively to preach."

Let us be driven to action by our compassion. Let us use our Lenten reflection to motivate our work for justice. Let us commit to living and acting boldly. Let us spread a message of justice and joy, of abundance, not scarcity, of hope, not fear. And let us welcome all justice-seekers into this work of building the kingdom of God.

Between now and Election Day, may we act to ensure that **all** have access to democracy, and **all** can participate in this year's election. We cannot allow policies that keep voters, especially low-income voters or voters of color, from voting. We need everyone's voices to be heard in our democracy because when We the People vote, we can elect politicians who work to mend the gaps and advance the common good.

"What Will You Do at Such a Time as This?"

By Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner

As I consider the importance of our democracy, I think of my Grandma Fannie. She came to this country by herself when she was only 16 years old. A dreamer. A refugee. A stranger in a strange land who didn't speak English and had no money.

She had the courage to make the journey after she saw the rabbi of her town in Russia dragged to his death, his beard tied to a horse. When she came to America, thank God - the light of the Statue of Liberty was lit and welcomed her to this country.

Here she found the promise of a country that gives "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance"

And as I consider the importance of our democracy, I remember my visit to Pittsburgh, to the Tree of Life Synagogue just hours after the tragic massacre, the worst incident of violence against Jews in American history. Thousands of us gathered in Soldiers and Sailors Hall; standing-room-only with countless others outside the venue watching on flat-screen TVs.

A Muslim leader committed to raise the money for the families of the victims and offered that his community would stand vigil outside synagogues to keep us safe; he was followed by a prominent Black pastor who said three things: First, let us remember that this was antisemitism, an attack on Jews - and an attack on Jews is an attack on all of us.

Second, he reminded us that three days before two black people were shot at a Krogers supermarket because the black church the shooter tried to enter was locked, because of the murder of nine Blacks folks at Mother Emanuel Church in Charleston three years before.

And finally, he said this synagogue was targeted because they were a HIAS congregation – the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society – seeking to welcome refugees, migrants and strangers.

Spontaneously at that moment, thousands of people all around me started to chant:

Vote!

Vote!

Vote!

I understood then the lesson that my refugee grandmother’s journey taught me:

Our security comes in our solidarity. Our safety comes through our democracy.

This election will determine the future for Dreamers, immigrants and refugees. This election will impact the lives of women, LGBTQ+ folks, and people of color. This election could declare our commitment to saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, ending the plague of gun violence.

This election could bring on a time as the prophet envisioned that all who dwell here will “merit and enjoy the good will of the other Inhabitants; while everyone shall sit in safety under their own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make them afraid.”

So, what will you do at such a time as this? What will you do to support the countless souls’ whose future is at stake?

Will you join us?

A spirited advocate for social justice, Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner is the Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. He also serves as the senior vice president of the Union for Reform Judaism. Rabbi Pesner first delivered this reflection in a speech at the Union for Reform Judaism’s Biennial 2019 announcing the Reform Movement’s Civic Engagement Campaign.

We Pray

Almighty God, most merciful and providential, as people of faith, we come to you today in a spirit of humility and hope. During these challenging times help us to restore the sacred responsibility of our leaders to the common good, to equality and inclusion, and to protect the disempowered. We know that every human being is a person of dignity and worth. In this powerful and troubled nation, guide our efforts to shape a more just democracy that values this truth. Root out the corrosive power of money and restore the common good as the purpose of our politics.

Dear God, we ask that you deliver this nation from cynicism and from the erosion of trust that divides us. Help us to remain ever hopeful and to hold firm to our faith in the spirit of self-governance and the dignity of democratic representation. Empower us with free and honest elections reflecting the collective wisdom and the will of the people. Watch over us in this moment of our nation's history and grant us the insight to know the right way forward and the perseverance to create a truly faithful democracy.

God of humanity, open our eyes to the rightful priority of people over money and power in our politics.

God of abundance, let the wisdom of our democracy be guided by the richness and diversity of the American people.

God of liberation, free our democracy and our elected officials from the stranglehold of money and special interests.

God of conversion, soften the hearts of our lawmakers and open them to needed reforms in our democratic institutions.

God of unity, energize people of goodwill across the nation to join movements for positive change.

God of righteousness, help us create a democracy that addresses the needs of the silenced and the marginalized.

God of truth, restore the faith of the American people in the promise and the spirit of our democracy.

God of reconciliation, help us shape a shared national identity rooted in kindness and healthy civil discourse.

Amen.

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Take Action

Pledge to be a Spirit-Filled Voter: Take the NETWORK pledge to be a Spirit-filled voter in the 2020 Elections. This means evaluating candidates' positions on mend the gap issues, having transformative conversations with fellow voters, sharing your vision for a future of justice, and more.

Together, we can transform our nation! Visit: www.networkadvocates.org/spiritfilledvoters/pledge.