

# GOD BLESS AMERICA

We celebrate with great joy when any of our refugee families become US citizens. The naturalization ceremony always makes my heart swell with patriotism and gratitude for the gift of being born in this great country.

But, as my father used to remind me, with great gifts comes great responsibility. His parents were immigrants and this land offered them opportunities for education and providing a good life for their families. They never forgot that. Neither did my dad who encouraged us to be informed voters. We'd have discussions at the dinner table about issues and candidates. Sometimes he would take opposing views so that we could see things from another perspective



In school we talked about the “common good,” a phrase seldom heard today that said that, in making policies and coming to decisions, elected leaders should assure that all parts of society would benefit, not just a select group. When we walked into that voting booth, we were prepared. Voting was a privilege and a responsibility, one I’ve exercised every election since I was eligible to vote.

In those early days there was little TV (I know I’m dating myself). The first presidential debate didn’t occur until I was a senior in high school. Today, things are quite different. We are bombarded by so many kinds of media it’s hard to turn off the noise. And political discourse has gotten ugly—and uglier.

If you’re like me, you wear out the “mute” button when the avalanche of political ads come on TV—each one meaner and nastier than the other. This time it’s begun almost a year in advance of the election. The contentious mood spills over into relationships resulting in family tensions and broken friendships

I’m convinced that we’re all better than that. It doesn’t have to be this way. Civilize It a national movement to keep respectful dialogue during this election season offers another way. Imagine what would happen if aggressiveness were transformed into openness and confrontations were turned into thoughtful conversations. Civilize It is a non-partisan movement endorsed by the social action commission of the archdiocese. “It is a call for all of us to help change the tone, follow our faith, and quiet the quarrels in our day-to-day lives.” It suggests each of us pledge to:

1. Civility: To reflect respect, to throw no stones, and to rise above it.
2. Clarity: To align my political point of view with my formed conscience.

3. Compassion: To encounter others with a tone and posture that say “I see dignity and goodness in you.”

How different things would be if we lived this pledge not just at election time but in all of our relationships. The “we” and “they” would become an “us.” We would all be neighbors looking out for each other. We would become brothers and sisters coming from different nations and experiences. We would become truly one family. We are blessed to experience that at St. Leo’s. I think that’s the real American Dream.

- Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate