

BE WARY AND CHOOSE THE LESSER EVIL

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Great philosophers such as H. Arendt and J. Habermas have examined the relationships between social structures (economic, political, cultural) and politics, as well as the existing and undeniable connections between politics, social communication, violence, and power.

These days, in the United States, we are immersed in an electoral campaign between two candidates, representatives of the traditional Democratic and Republican parties. This campaign reaches all of us through the proposals broadcast through our so-called “social” media networks.

It falls to us as citizens to choose between these proposals and to do this effectively in a world of intricate and complex relationships. It falls to us to become “wary philosophers,” searching – always – for the truth and for what is best for the good of the majority in this nation. It is easy to “be wary,” to unmask the cynicism, lies, half-truths, and “fake news,” in the “political” proposals that are presented to us as true and best for all.

Be wary, because in this postmodern conjuncture of humanity, there is disenchantment with politics and politicians, and with hierarchy and institutions. This disenchantment originates – to a great extent – from the inability of political parties and leaders to produce justice, equity, prosperity, and peace for all. This disenchantment exists because the parties and politicians have turned their backs, through their actions, on what is best for the “polis,” the public good, the common good, the best interest of the majority. Instead, they have sought to pursue individual, private, personal, and selfish interests.

Be wary, because the communications that reach us today, through so many mediums may not be so “social” or collective at all. Today, “social” media responds, on its knees, to the interests of the economic groups that own these networks, to large multinationals, or to the interests of the political parties to which the owners of these networks belong.

Be wary, because today in the world, we have a shortage of men and women leaders with authority who are capable of truth, coherence of life, and correspondence between their deeds and words. We live amidst authoritarianism without authority. We live among men and women who bellow and shout about everything and against everything but who – hypocritically – “do not do what they say.”

Be wary, because today's political leaders seemingly ignore the direct and close relationship between communication and violence. Charged with seeking peace and "social" harmony, with their speeches and arguments, they often become arsonists who do not measure the damage they cause to life in society, because they seem to follow – cynically and to the letter – the maxim of J. Goebbels, a close collaborator of A. Hitler: "A lie repeated a thousand times becomes the truth."

Confronted by all of this, we face a bleak political panorama. This electoral campaign is sad and poor. The proposals are precarious, and the nation faces an uncertain near future. The candidate who tirelessly rants, mistreats, and curses immigrants, all immigrants, through all kinds of fallacies, within a nation built by the hand and sweat of immigrants is as immoral and dangerous as the candidate who disrespects our right to the gift and value of life, starting with the right to life of the unborn.

Yet, facing this sad political and electoral panorama, it falls to us all to reflect, clarify, and refine our human and religious conscience so we can be responsible citizens committed to the present and future of this great nation.

It is the duty of the candidates to live in the truth, to present it, and to promote political programs that benefit us all, to safeguard the fundamental human values of every human being in society, such as the right to life and dignity, solidarity with the most needy, the right to decent work and social opportunities, to ensure the good of the family and nature, always searching for equity, social justice, freedom, and peace.

It falls to us all to understand that politics is an ongoing action built by all citizens when all of us – through our daily actions – build the common good and the progress of our nation.

So, amid so many lies, this lack of authority, these unsuspected economic interests, etc., it is up to us to vote and elect, as Pope Francis recently advised, with concern and a hint of disappointment. When asked about this U.S. election, he counseled, "Vote for the lesser evil."

Unfortunately, we are choosing and voting between two options and candidates who – from what they themselves preach – appear to represent two evils. This time, we are not choosing between good and evil, so, as it is colloquially said in Latin America, let us choose "the least worst,"