

Guidelines For Speaking On Hot Button Issues Of The Day

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How do we preach on political issues while maintaining the integrity of our positions as religious leaders and preserving the sanctity of our houses of worship and religious traditions?

As one who has taught preaching and has spoken from pulpits in local congregations for over forty years, I offer you eight suggestions that you may find helpful as you prepare your own sermon, meditation or homily encouraging your members to participate in the democratic process:

- 1- When speaking on political issues as a religious leader, speak as a *religious* leader informed by the scriptures and traditions of your religious heritage.
- 2- Speak out of the scriptures of your religious tradition to address political issues rather than using selected citations from your scriptures to justify a particular perspective on those issues.
- 3- When speaking on political issues, prepare carefully and speak only out of the expertise that you have developed related to the matter being addressed.
- 4- Refrain from imposing guilt on people by charging that they have not met the challenge involved in relating religion to politics without straightforwardly setting before them specific ways in which they can meet responsibly the challenge described.
- 5- Deal with issues, values, and principles in your sermon, homily, meditation, or speech, but not with personalities.
- 6- Do not identify a partisan political agenda with the religious positions you commend on political concerns.
- 7- All encouragement of influential political involvement on the part of people of faith and goodwill should be accompanied by clear statements of caution related to the necessity of protecting the constitutional principle of religious liberty and its corollary the institutional separation of religion and government.
- 8- Stress the importance of politics as an important arena in which to express religious values but warn against assigning too much importance – ultimate value – to politics.