



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

Connected by Humanity

“Our national motto,” writes Alexandra Hudson, “is *e pluribus unum*. ‘Out of many, one.’ We must see one another as persons first—connected and unified by our common humanity—and care more about common decency and kindness than about which fork to use. This is what allows us to coexist amidst deep difference. It is also what allows for reasoned, spirited debate—the lifeblood of democracy. Discourse on topics of the first order—religion, philosophy, politics—is only possible when we recognize that differences are not problems to be *fixed* but resources to be *mined*. Remembering this is central to our free and democratic society. A path toward depolarized, more tolerant, and more civil future begins with each of us . . . choosing to see, love, and respect the dignity and diversity of one another.” (Alexandra Hudson is the author of *The Soul of Civility: Timeless Principles to Heal Society and Ourselves*.)

What can we do? Alexandra Hudson encourages us “to promote tolerance and diminish partisanship.” She challenges us to: **1)** Practice civility. Even when we disagree with one another, that disagreement “does not negate our irreducible value as persons.” **2)** “Unbundle people. Resist the temptation to define people by one aspect of who they are or by their worst trait or decision. . . . [R]eclaim a full, nuanced, and rich view of the human person.” Each of us, after all, “is a little bit good and a little bit bad.” **3)** “When you get into a disagreement with a friend or family member, remember context—the entirety of the history and relationship you have with them.” Don’t let disagreements (especially over politics) “be the focal point of your relationship.” **4)** “Remember the transformative power of friendship. Allowing ourselves to be shaped, inspired, and motivated to surrender self-love enables us to discover eudemonic friendships that deepens our soul, makes us more human and humane, and helps us thrive personally and socially.”

5) “Stay curious about the many reasons people come to their beliefs about the world. Remember that everyone has something to teach us.” **6)** “Don’t publicly shame and abuse others—don’t exert power over them while they are defenseless. To do so inflames our *libido dominandi* and deforms our soul.” It is wrong to bludgeon and silence people into conformity. “Civility instead empowers diversity of expression—and, crucially, cultural tolerance of diverse views.” **7)** “Vigilantly nurture” friendships made across lines of difference. “. . . Like civilization itself—they are fragile and can easily be broken.” **8)** Remember that civility “requires civil truth-telling in love, not patronizing politeness.” So, “say what you mean. Don’t lie. Ennoble, don’t debase. . . . Bring out the best in [your] audience . . . Tyrants inflame. Princes guide.” Finally, “you don’t have to have an opinion and speak up on every issue all the time.” As Marcus Aurelius said: “You always own the option of having no opinion.” (Excerpted from *The Soul of Civility*, 261-263.) Every day, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . .” (Colossians 3:12-15).

Please pray for courageous civility... in Jesus’ name.

America in a Dark Age

“The Christian cultural capital that Americans have long taken for granted,” writes John Daniel Davidson, “has run out. We are rapidly, and inevitably, losing the virtues, principles, and assumptions that shaped our republic. Taking its place will be a despotism, the product of a new paganism worse than the old, based on a hatred of Christianity.” Davidson warns that “there is no escape. The liberal order is simply not sustainable without a Christian understanding of human nature, virtue, and political life. The morality that is our Christian inheritance will be replaced by a state-enforced substitute. Violence will be common—doled out by an all-powerful state and its corporate allies.” There may be no escape, but there is a choice.

We can choose to rebuild a Christian culture in the presence of a pagan one. "Paganism . . . imposes a moral relativism in which power alone determines right. The principles Americans have always asserted against this kind of moral and political tyranny—freedom of speech, equal protection under the law, government by consent of the governed—depend for their sustenance on the Christian faith, alive and active among the people, shaping their private and family lives as much as the social and political life of the nation."

Davidson reminds us that we cannot vanquish or eradicate evil. This world is "in decline, marred by sin and corruption, embroiled in a rebellion against God. But as Christians we repose our hope in a God who can, and indeed already has, conquered sin and death." (Excerpts from the Introduction to *Pagan America: The Decline of Christianity and the Dark Age to Come* by John Daniel Davidson.)

What can we do? Be faithful. Trust that we are not without reason for hope. Study Christian history. Learn from the Christian men and women before us. Understand that through many centuries of Christendom, "there have been periods of great upheaval and chaos, times when it seems that perhaps the Christian faith itself would be lost—to pagan persecution, to Muslim conquest, to the fracturing forces of the Reformation and the century of religious warfare it unleashed. Yet each time the faith has survived . . ." Do not despair! Instead, be grateful to see "a picture of the Church in the midst of increasing opposition from the world. And therefore, live your lives in the full consciousness of this hour of testing, and rally close to the heart of Christ."

Please pray that *Jesus' holy and precious bride, the Church, be dressed for battle, and that each member fight the good fight... in Jesus' name.*

Courage in the Midst of Persecution

"What lies on the other side of America's founding faith," writes John Daniel Davidson, "is a country that not even the most hardened atheist would want to live in—a country where there are no rights, no protection for the weak, but only the raw exercise of power." Some of us will surely ask, "Why, God? Why did you have me be born into such a time and place as this?" Perhaps the better question is: "What would You have me to do, dear God, with the life You have given me in this time and place?"

Although we probably won't see the "recovery of Christianity as the basis for civic life in America" during our lifetime, we can faithfully repair the foundation for generations to come. "If Christians are to be the persecuted minority in America," says Davidson, "then let them be a loud and unflinching minority, boldly proclaiming their faith in public, taking what ground they can, and ready to suffer the consequences."

The Christian life is not for Sunday only, or occasional volunteer work with charities. Instead, it "must inform and direct everything [we] do, including major life decisions like where to live, how to educate [our] children, and how to provide for [our] families. . . . Christians are called to defend the faith. And to do that," concludes Davidson, "sometimes you have to fight." By this, he does not mean "win back the White House or a majority in Congress. No political leader or merely political movement will reverse the ongoing de-Christianization of America and the rise of a neopagan mainstream culture." What Davidson means is to fight the good fight. "Even in pagan America," says Davidson, "Christians do not need to reinvent Christian civilization, they need only to rediscover and reassert it. The fact that it must be rediscovered is why we now live in a post-Christian society. Today, at the dawn of a new pagan era, Christians need to show the world why it needs the faith." (Excerpts from Chapter Ten of *Pagan America*.)

What can we do? Shine brightly! "Pagan America will be for most ordinary people—nominal Christians and pagans alike—a place of fear and spiritual darkness. In this darkness, amid the ruin of our civilization and the oppression and arrogance of the pagan state, the light of a vibrant and outward-looking Christian community will shine brightly. The faith will attract converts, but it will also attract persecution." We can expect insults, mockery, and even violence. We are called to remember what Jesus promised His disciples: "If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you." We can prepare to "be poorer and more marginalized," to "give up certain things, to live differently, to sacrifice, and to rediscover the trades." We can "build Christian business and employment networks." We can accept the task of preserving and propagating Christianity while we oppose the lies and deceptions of cults and worldly ideology. Because of what Jesus has done, we are called to live these days as sons and daughters of God. We can believe that the church militant will be the Church triumphant.

Please pray to *fear not the foe... in Jesus' name.*

