The Right Reverend Kirk Stevan Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
BISHOP OF ARIZONA

Pastoral Letter from Bishop Smith

[The canons require that Pastoral Letters from the Bishop be read at a Sunday services closest to the date they were issued. If that proves to be impossible, the clergy in charge may mention the letter at announcement time and have copies available for those who would like to read it. It should also be read and discussed at your next Vestry or Bishop's Committee meeting.]

Palm Sunday 2016

Dear People of God,

At our recent House of Bishops meeting at Camp Allen in Texas, I joined with my colleagues in issuing a letter addressing the climate of violent political rhetoric we are facing in our country today, especially in the current Presidential campaign. We unanimously adopted the following statement, and I am sharing it with you this Palm Sunday as a Pastoral Letter from me. It comes with my prayers for you, our church, and our country as we enter into Holy Week.

Faithfully,

+ Kirk

The Rt. Rev. Kirk Stevan Smith, Ph.D., D.D.
V Bishop of Arizona

Episcopal Bishops Issue a Word to the Church

"*We reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others.*"

On Good Friday the ruling political forces of the day tortured and executed an innocent man. They sacrificed the weak and the blameless to protect their own status and power. On the third day Jesus was raised from the dead, revealing not only their injustice but also unmasking the lie that might makes right.

In a country still living under the shadow of the lynching tree, we are troubled by the violent forces being released by this season's political rhetoric. Americans are turning against their neighbors, particularly those on the margins of society. They seek to secure their own safety and security at the expense of others. There is legitimate reason to fear where this rhetoric and the actions arising from it might take us.

In this moment, we resemble God's children wandering in the wilderness. We, like they, are struggling to find our way. They turned from following God and worshiped a golden calf constructed from their own wealth. The current rhetoric is leading us to construct a modern false idol out of power and privilege. We reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others. No matter where we fall on the political spectrum, we must respect the dignity of every human being and we must seek the common good above all else.

We call for prayer for our country that a spirit of reconciliation will prevail and we will not betray our true selves.

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