

A Perspective...
Rev. Suzanne Paul

Unless you just arrived from Jupiter, you probably have become aware that there will be a presidential election in November, 2008. Yes, it is more than a year away, but we earthlings have already been hearing about it for months. I know the old adage about the “early bird catching the worm” but this premature race to the White House seems a bit, well, premature. But then I don’t profess to know a great deal about political strategy. The last and only time I ran for an elected office – I was in the 11th grade and was a student body hopeful. As I recall, we put up banners about a week before the election and called it a day. I didn’t get elected – so perhaps my strategy needed work. I could have used a “political pundit” or two.

Even though we have been inundated with political news in every form of media known to humankind, among my friends and family, not much has been said. I think that old chestnut of “not discussing politics or religion” had been so firmly ingrained in us that we don’t think it wise to talk about our preferences on either topic. And so, while the press has become almost apoplectic in shouting their predictions and their preferences, the general public remains silent. Pity, really. We should talk about both religion and politics because they both form the way we live our lives and our world view.

My son has spent considerable time in France over the years. He has told me that the favorite pastime of the French is to discuss – and quite passionately – both religion and politics. They sit at those quaint out-door cafes and drink very strong coffee and talk and talk about these two taboo subjects. Since he speaks French he oftentimes joined in the conversation. What he discovered was that the French are very well informed in both of these areas, not just well informed for their own edification – but well informed enough to discuss their views with others. As an American, he thought that was quite radical. He was taught, by me I suppose, that one’s views on politics and religion were best kept to one’s self.

In recent days, I’ve been rethinking my position on this. I think I have come to the conclusion – and I’m certainly not the first person to have this thought – that everything is political. Therefore, we should be discussing our political and religious views with the same ease as we discuss where we vacation and where the best buy is on a flat screen TV. Sharing our thoughts on either subject need not be divisive or threatening, but could prove informative and inspiring.

I believe that we choose a political party, or a particular political candidate, because they best represent what we value and what we value stems from our religious beliefs. So it is foolhardy to say that religion and politics are two different things. Indeed, they are one and the same. If you would like to find the candidate that most closely aligns with your value system, try www.wqad.com. I found it most helpful – the results might surprise you. Share the site with family and friends – and then find a table at Starbucks, order a latte and let the conversation begin. The French shouldn’t have all the fun!