

“WITH MALICE TOWARDS NONE”: WORKING ACROSS THE AISLE

Young people are skeptical when I explain that until the early 1970’s, many players on the Minnesota Twins or Vikings held **off-season jobs**. “No way!” Oh yes, indeed—they did so to **supplement** their relatively modest income. For old-time sake, I retrieved my collection of childhood baseball and football cards, noticing that the backside of the card contained **tidbits** about the players on a range of topics, including off-season activities. For example: “Rod (Carew) works in public relations for the Twins in the off season”; “Bart (Starr) represents a car company in the off-season”; (Viking linebacker) Karl Kassulke “does work for the March of Dimes” to name a few. Many held **off-season jobs** out of **necessity!** When he was not splitting the uprights with a field goal, Viking Fred Cox, a noted chiropractor, was adjusting people’s spines.

In politics, a similar principle held, albeit eleven score and twelve years ago! When the 1st Congress convened on **March 4, 1789**, members were paid **\$6.00 per day** (\$177 in 2021 dollars)— but **only** when they were **in session!** It clearly didn’t pay the bills! Over the past twenty years, Congress has averaged 147 legislative days per year (the U.S. Senate 165). With a congressional salary of \$174,000, the *per diem* is closer to \$1000. When the 117th Congress convened January 3, 2021, the **average length of service** for members was **8.9 years** for the House and **11.0 years** for the Senate. Thus, the **typical** member of today’s congress had previously been elected more than four times to the house and twice in the Senate. By contrast, **prior to the Civil War**, it was common for **40% of U.S. House** representatives **not** to seek re-election. That’s right— 40%. Today it is about 10%. Politics has become a **career**, and therein lies the **problem**.

It is time to admit what’s become obvious. We have a political **ruling class**. This past Wednesday, we changed administrations in surely one of the most unusual transfers of power in our nation’s history. Gone was the usual **pomp and circumstance**, in part due to the pandemic, but also largely due to the manner in which President Trump chose to exit the stage. No photo ops of the President and President-elect, no morning tea with the spouses. No shared limousine ride to the Capitol, a custom dating to a horse-drawn carriage ride in 1837 with President Andrew Jackson and incoming Martin Van Buren. (President Andrew Johnson was the last to skip the inauguration of his successor, Ulysses S. Grant in 1869.) Inauguration Day was eerily strange, unlike any I could recall. Perhaps it was fitting, given that everyone intuits how **polarized** our nation is. That division did not begin in 2016— it has been brewing for years. But it’s boiling over now, and we **all lose** in the process. It is critical that politicians work across the aisle.

In 2005, I began a program of theological studies in Rome. Having been advised that watching television during my free time would assist in learning Italian, I dutifully complied. I was immediately introduced to Italian politics. Sadly, it was mostly an exercise in frustration for two reasons. First, being new to the language, they spoke so rapidly to my untrained ear. Secondly, **every channel** seemed to be reporting on **politics 24/7**. Have you tried to make sense out of the Italian political situation? Dealing with one foreign language was bad enough— trying to figure out a second was too much! I settled upon a game show, where I could simultaneously listen and read the questions— and gave up the news. I chuckled at the Italian political system, while being **far too haughty** about our own. I’ve changed!

While having at least **ten political parties** was thoroughly confusing, a coalition government did have to **build consensus** in order to govern. Though coalitions fell apart all too often, at least they tried. Can we say that today about Washington D.C.? Political discussions are at the bottom of my list, especially as a priest. But I do wish to offer a few “non-partisan” reflections on our current climate. It is difficult to imagine our **founding fathers** envisioning a **permanent political** class, though many served multiple terms themselves. The founders carefully distinguished the House (i.e. grass roots democracy) from the Senate (a bit more aristocratic to be blunt), a completely separate and equal judiciary, and an Executive branch that had reserved powers, though with plenty of checks and balances.

But they never imposed Congressional **term limits**, the exception being the XXII Amendment limiting to two terms the office of the U.S. Presidency. Perhaps this should be **considered** across the board. A total of **48 U.S. Senators** and **147 Congressional Representatives** are **over 65**, for many years the traditional retirement age. The

nine oldest U.S. Senators average 83 years of age, while the nine youngest average 46 years of age. I shall be careful here— after all, the median age of the Cardinal papal electors is 73! It is **not** primarily an issue of **age**, but length of service. **Sixteen senators** have served at least 20 years in the senate, while **70 U.S. House members** have served **at least ten** two-year terms. While seniority does not ensure gridlock, one has to wonder if fresh faces might accomplish more. Let us pray that our elected leaders of **both parties** will truly work together for the common good of this nation. After all, that’s why they were elected!

- Speaking of baseball cards. After rummaging through my cards, I was curious. Given his incredible **life story** of breaking the color barrier in the majors, in 2010 I purchased a 1948 Leaf **Jackie Robinson rookie** card. The identical grade of card recently sold for **26x** what I paid only a decade ago! **Take that** for a rate of return, Amazon!
- **“With malice toward none**; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.” Click the link to read Abraham Lincoln’s [Second Inaugural Address](#) delivered on March 4, 1865.
- Human Rights groups continue to apply pressure for the United Nations to recognize the **horrendous repression** of the Chinese **Uyghur** population at the hand of the Communist government. Over 1,000,000 have been forced into government run “re-education” camps, code for **forced political indoctrination**. The Uyghurs are a predominately Muslim Turkic ethnic group.
- While continuing to employ all appropriate COVID protocols in Church, we are also expanding the availability of seating by **roping off fewer** pews in the **blue sections**, those reserved for 3 or fewer people in a household. If more people spread out into the Dayton Ave. side of the Church, it more **evenly distributes** the congregation.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector

Jackie Robinson
Brooklyn Dodgers
Rookie Card- 1948

