After the Election: How Can We Heal?

By George D. McClain

If you've ever worked with a Gestalt Pastoral Care minister, you've been encouraged to notice what is going on in your body. To focus on our bodies is one of the great gifts of Gestalt Pastoral Care (GPC). To give voice to various body parts (for me, a stiff neck, or an aching knee) can take us right to unfinished grief, anger, longing, or love.

It is common to refer to our nation as a "body politic." So in this post-election time, I'd like for us to think about our part in healing our political "body."

First, we need to probe the question, what is going in our political body? Given the almost unprecedented divisions, different populations would speak in different voices. Some would speak of hurt, some of relief, some of anxiety, some of denial.

In GPC we seek to listen, to be keenly attentive to the voices or sounds that emanate from a body part. Gently we receive these expressions and encompass them in the love and redemption of God.

Do you feel called to be an agent of God's healing of the American body politic? I hope so. Our political body is hurting in so many ways.

Here's a suggestion for how you might do this. It involves "listening" to the "voices" of various parts of the body politic in this post-election time.

A. Sitting quietly, listen to the pain and fears of those who voted differently than you. Think of the wide variety of reasons and experiences that have prompted them to vote that way. It might be party loyalty, personal finances, sources of information, social media, family ties, or a single issue. (Suggestion: Take a couple minutes to record what you "hear" on paper.)

B. Then listen for the voices of those people of the American political body who did not vote. Imagine the different experiences and conditions that led them not to vote, including health, indifference, homelessness, incarceration, age, despair, or voter suppression. (Again, take a couple minutes to record what you "hear" from these hurting populations.)

C. Next, listen to your own voice and that of those who voted in the way you have. Give voice to the variety of reasons and experiences that have led you and others to vote as you have. (Yet again, record these "voices.")

D. Now imagine those candidates, up and down the ballot, who lost in this election and record their voices.
E. And then note the voices of those who just won an election, and note their voices.

Then choose an icon of the Holy that is special to you. Thinking of the American body politic, imagine this whole universe of disparate voices and emotions, the joys and the disappointments, the anger and the satisfaction. Gently place them all in the infinite arms of the Holy. Let them rest in that embrace.

Finally, lift before your icon of the Holy the range of continuing sufferings in our body politic. They may include the Covid-19 pandemic, racial oppression, climate change, broken democratic institutions, a crippled economy, lost jobs, truncated schooling, and many more. And be listening with your inner ear for any Word, any hint, any suggestion directed to your own heart. Be open to a personal step, however modest, that you can take to be a part of the healing of the body politic that you pray for. Begin anew to be the future you hope for. (You may wish to note down any inner sense you're feeling.)

And then thank the Holy One for receiving your prayer, for receiving all the post-election voices, and for hearing your prayer. Offer gratitude for a way forward, for a new beginning for you and the whole body of American people.

See website: www.gestaltpastoralcare.org.