Monastic Scribe 111 – November 6, 2026

FOR JUSTICE AND HONESTY!

This column will appear after the midterm elections in the United States and I am writing before that election day. People are angry, confused, hurting in many ways. Will the results of this election help the situation? They will possibly confirm the direction we have been traveling. Or they could bring a backlash and even demand change which hopefully will not lead to a denial of what the people have chosen.

The world order is shaken. People are turning to fascist, authoritarian and right-wing governments, believing that strong leaders will face the issues and make changes. Billionaires and large corporations have been directing our culture while the needs of the middle and lower class have suffered. Churches are polarized by fear as well. The "prosperity gospel" is embraced by many churches. At least those who live in well-off areas and can live comfortable lives want the status quo to continue. They can go to church, thankful for God's blessings and keep their religion pure and unchangeable convinced that they have lived good lives and can look forward to a reward of blessedness in heaven after this life.

I find hope in the leadership of Pope Leo XIV. He seems to be the preeminent moral voice of our day. My respect for him does not rely simply that he is a Catholic nor do I believe he is offering some denominational solution to our predicament. The Pope has a unique "Bully pulpit" (as Theodore Roosevelt named it) to be beyond any political need to run for office or be accepted. Some of his critics call him "leftist Leo" or "liberal Leo" for his views. But I admire him for his solid base in the Judaeo-Christian moral tradition. He is personally neither right nor left, liberal nor conservative, but an adherent of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the biblical tradition. He has been formed by being an American with a respect for law, order and democracy. He has also been formed by twenty years among Peruvian people and seen what people on the fringes of society need but also can offer us. And as a former head of the Augustinian Order of religious friars, he has visited fifty countries and is well aware of global issues.

Pope Leo has a responsibility for over a billion Catholics on this globe. The Vatican has contacts with governments of every persuasion. He is certainly not isolated or cut off from the problems of the world.

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If you have not read anything written by Pope Leo, or have not heard him speak, I suggest you start with his great encyclical, “Magnifica Humanitas”. It is written in comprehensible English and moves along nicely. Five brief chapters contain a review of the social doctrine of the church, such as concern for the common good and respect for the dignity of every human being. Then the text moves along to apply just and truthful principles to our use of technology, especially AI, and issues such as slavery and just war. It points us to a just and caring world. Here at the monastery, we had a great three-part symposium on the encyclical in September. The recordings of the texts with three excellent speakers can be found at www.glastonburyabbey.org under “Programs”.

There are certainly those critics who accuse the Pope, as well as other religious writers and preachers, as meddling in politics. The irony of our day is that politics is now affecting religion but the opposite should be true, namely that religion must affect, not so much politics, but the morality of political situations. To honor the dignity of every human person from conception to natural death is a moral issue and includes prisoners, immigrants, disabled and bedridden people. To care for the environment of our natural world is a moral issue. To speak the truth and avoid putting people down by spreading hidden faults (slander) or untrue accusations (calumny), is a moral issue. To provide food for the hungry, housing for the homeless, are moral issues. To seek peace and avoid war is a moral issue. To use technology in a human way is a moral issue. And there are many other human acts that are moral in meaning.

Thankfully there are many people in our towns and cities that work to fulfill these moral needs. They are to be commended and thanked. They ought to be encouraged and imitated. Concern for the common good and for the least of God’s children takes place every day and is the work of God. I encourage you to do what you can and also to read and know what is happening. We support each other and those in the most need by both prayer and action. You can share any of your thoughts with me at: joycet@glastonburyabbey.org.

Blessings on you and all you can contribute and do for others. That’s why we are here together on this earth.

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Please note that I do not speak on behalf of Glastonbury Abbey, the Archdiocese of Boston or the Catholic Church, though I hope my faith is in harmony with all these. Any error in judgment should be credited to me and not anyone else.