

# MANNA *in the wilderness*

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The Newsletter of the Las Vegas Catholic Worker

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## Reclaiming Jesus: The Challenge of the Gospel Message

This is an abridged version of a statement authored by numerous Christian elders. Read it in full at [ReclaimingJesus.org](http://ReclaimingJesus.org)

We are living through perilous and polarizing times as a nation, with a dangerous crisis of moral and political leadership at the highest levels of our government and in our churches. We believe the soul of the nation and the integrity of faith are now at stake.

It is time to be followers of Jesus before anything else—nationality, political party, race, ethnicity, gender, geography—our identity in Christ precedes every other identity.

When politics undermines our theology, we must examine that politics. The church's role is to change the world through the life and love of Jesus Christ. The government's role is to serve the common good by protecting justice and peace, rewarding good behavior while restraining bad behavior (*Romans 13*). When that role is undermined by political leadership, faith leaders must stand up and speak out. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state."

It is often the duty of Christian leaders, especially elders, to speak the truth in love to our churches and to name and warn against temptations, racial and cultural captivities, false doctrines, and political idolatries—and even our complicity in them. We do so here with humility, prayer, and a deep dependency on the grace and Holy Spirit of God.

Jesus is Lord. That is our foundational confession. If Jesus is Lord, then Caesar was not—nor any other political ruler since. If Jesus is Lord, no other authority is absolute. Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of God he announced, is the Christian's first loyalty, above all others. We pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Our faith is personal but never private, meant not only for heaven but for this earth.

The question we face is this: Who is Jesus Christ for us today? What does our loyalty to Christ, as disciples, require at this moment in our history? We believe it is time to renew our theology of public discipleship and witness. Applying what "Jesus



*I Was Hungry*, by Meinrad Craighead (*Matthew 25: 34 - 36*)

is Lord" means today is the message we commend as elders to our churches.

What we believe leads us to what we must reject. Our "Yes" is the foundation for our "No." What we confess as our faith leads to what we confront. Therefore, we offer the six affirmations of what we believe, and the resulting rejections of practices and policies by political leaders which dangerously corrode the soul of the nation and deeply threaten the public integrity of our faith. (See [ReclaimingJesus.org](http://ReclaimingJesus.org) for rejections of practices and policies not reprinted here.)

**I. WE BELIEVE** each human being is made in God's image and likeness (*Gen-*

*esis 1:26*). That image and likeness confers a divinely decreed dignity, worth, and God-given equality to all of us as children of the one God who is the Creator of all things. Racial bigotry is a brutal denial of the image of God (the *imago dei*) in some of the children of God. Our participation in the global community of Christ absolutely prevents any toleration of racial bigotry. Racial justice and healing are biblical and theological issues for us, and are central to the mission of the body of Christ in the world. We give thanks for the prophetic role of the historic black churches in America when they have called for a more  
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faithful gospel.

**II. WE BELIEVE** we are one body. In Christ, there is to be no oppression based on race, gender, identity, or class (*Galatians 3:28*). The body of Christ, where those great human divisions are to be overcome, is meant to be an example for the rest of society. When we fail to overcome these oppressive obstacles, and even perpetuate them, we have failed in our vocation to the world—to proclaim and live the reconciling gospel of Christ.

**III. WE BELIEVE** how we treat the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner is how we treat Christ himself (*Matthew 25: 31-46*). “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” God calls us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, and our treatment of people who are “oppressed,” “strangers,” “outsiders,” or otherwise considered “marginal” is a test of our relationship to God, who made us all equal in divine dignity and love. Our proclamation of the lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake in our solidarity with the most vulnerable. If our gospel is not “good news to the poor,” (*Luke 4:18*), it is not a gospel of Jesus Christ.

**IV. WE BELIEVE** that truth is morally central to our personal and public lives. Truth-telling is central to the prophetic biblical tradition, whose vocation includes speaking the Word of God into their societies and speaking the truth to power. A commitment to speaking truth, the ninth commandment of the Decalogue, “You shall not bear false witness” (*Exodus 20:16*), is foundational to shared trust in society. Falsehood can enslave us, but Jesus prom-

ises, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (*John 8:32*). The search and respect for truth is crucial to anyone who follows Christ.

**V. WE BELIEVE** that Christ’s way of leadership is servanthood, not domination. Jesus said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles (the world) lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant.” (*Matthew 20:25-26*). We believe our elected officials are called to public service, not public tyranny, so we must protect the limits, checks, and balances of democracy and encourage humility and civility on the part of elected officials. We support democracy, not because we believe in human perfection, but because we do not. The authority of government is instituted by God to order an unredeemed society for the sake of justice and peace, but ultimate authority belongs only to God.

**VI. WE BELIEVE** Jesus when he tells us to go into all nations making disciples (*Matthew 28:18*). Our churches and our nations are part of an international community whose interests always surpass national boundaries. The most well-known verse in the New Testament starts with “For God so loved the world.” (*John 3:16*). We, in turn, should love and serve the world and all its inhabitants, rather than seek first narrow, nationalistic prerogatives.

**WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED** for the soul of our nation, but also for our churches and the integrity of our faith. The present crisis calls us to go deeper—deeper into our relationship to God; deeper into our relationships with each other, especially across racial, ethnic, and national lines; deeper into our relationships with the most vulnerable, who are at greatest risk.

The best response to our political, material, cultural, racial, or national idolatries is the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before me.” Jesus summarizes the Greatest Commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, and your mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” As to loving our neighbors, we would add “no exceptions.”

Our urgent need, in a time of moral and political crisis, is to recover the power of confessing our faith. Lament, repent, and then repair. If Jesus is Lord, there is always space for grace. We believe it is time to speak and to act in faith and conscience, not because of politics, but because we are disciples of Jesus Christ—to whom be all authority, honor, and glory. It is time for a fresh confession of faith. Jesus is Lord. He is the light in our darkness.

**PLEASE JOIN US:**

- Wednesday-Saturday, 6:00 a.m.:** Morning prayer at Catholic Worker.
- Wednesday-Saturday, 6:30 a.m.:** Breakfast served to 150-200 poor & homeless people.
- Wednesday, 8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.:** Hospitality Day, we invite 20 homeless men home for showers, to wash clothes and for a great lunch.
- Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.:** Vigil for Peace: On first Thursday of the month in front of NNSA building on Losee Rd. (call for parking directions). All other Thursdays in front of Federal Courthouse, 333 Las Vegas Blvd. S.
- Thursday, 10:30 a.m.:** 50 lunches taken to the homeless.
- Second Saturday of the month:** Knights of Columbus Pancake Breakfast to the homeless.
- Third Saturday of the month:** Deliver food boxes to homes in need.

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**Justice for Our Desert**

sponsored by  
Nevada Desert Experience  
Oct. 7, 2018, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Food, Music & Workshops  
at the Happy Earth Market  
900 Karen Ave., Unit D-102  
Las Vegas, NV 89109

NevadaDesertExperience.org



**Do you have extra metal spoons?**

We are experimenting with using and washing metal spoons at our soup line instead of buying disposable plastic spoons. If you have extra metal spoons please consider donating them to us. Please call (702) 647-0728.

*Thank you to all our volunteers & donors!*

**In 2017, Over 1/3 of U.S. Homeless Live in 10 Cities:**

New York City	76,501
Los Angeles (city and county)	55,188
Seattle / King County	11,643
San Diego (city and county)	9,160
Washington, D.C.	7,473
San Jose/Santa Clara (city & county)	7,394
San Francisco	6,858
<b>Las Vegas / Clark County</b>	<b>6,490</b>
Boston	6,135
Philadelphia	5,693

Source: *U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development*

**Soupline Closed**

November 22 - 24  
December 26 - 29

**Knights of Columbus  
Christmas Breakfast  
for the Homeless:  
Saturday, Dec. 22**