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STATEMENT

Archbishop John C. Wester Supports Archbishop Wilton Gregory's Stance Against Use of Sacred Sites for Political Gain Urges the Faithful to Exercise Our Right and Duty to Vote Responsibly this Election Year

ALBUQUERQUE – Monday, June 15, 2020 –Archbishop John C. Wester supports Washington D. C.'s Archbishop Wilton Gregory's stance against the use of sacred sites for political gain and urges the faithful to exercise our right and duty to vote responsibly this election year.

Recently, Archbishop Wilton Gregory expressed his strong disapproval over the use of the St. John Paul II National Shrine as a political backdrop. I was pleased to read his statement, which confirmed my assessment of him as a man of integrity, courage and insight. Appointed by Pope Francis to shepherd the local Church in Washington, D.C., the archbishop was exercising his episcopal ministry to be a teacher and interpreter of the Gospel and the Catholic faith. He was right to defend the shrine as a holy site, one that has deep meaning for pilgrims and the deepening of their spiritual lives. Such sacred sites should not be used for political gain or partisan politics. Abiding by this tenet is even more important during an election year. Behind the archbishop's statement is the fact that the Church does not participate in the political process but does observe it, making contributions when appropriate by underscoring the moral principles contained in that process. Unfortunately, Archbishop Gregory has been subjected to unfair criticism and even ad hominem attacks that are completely out of line with Gospel values. It is because of these attacks and because I agree wholeheartedly with the archbishop that I feel compelled to make this public statement.

Considering these facts, I encourage all of us in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe to respect the proper role of the Catholic Church during this election year. I hope that we can all study carefully the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," putting its principles into action as we individually exercise our right and duty to vote responsibly. I believe that Archbishop Gregory has given us an excellent example of the Church's calling to assist the democratic process, but not be co-opted by it, as it shines as a light to the nations and a beacon of hope for all.

To take the pledge and commit to honor civil dignity, go to
<https://www.wearesaltandlight.org/civilize-it;>

for the prayer, "Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace: A Prayer for Civility," go to
https://www.wearesaltandlight.org/application/files/2015/7187/7298/Prayer_for_Civility.pdf --END