



## **St. Luke's East Hampton Reflections from Fr. Ben**

**April 16, 2026**

A few days ago, a meme showed up with the following words, “If we have to choose sides, I'm with the Pope... and I'm an atheist!”

I am not going to use this space responding to recent postings on social media or other unChristian actions by those who claim to be waging a holy war in the name of Christ. The Pope, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Washington and other leaders have done a good job saying what needs to be said. Instead, I would like to use this meme as an opportunity to ask what we expect from the Pope, our bishops, our priests, our fellow Christians, and ourselves, particularly during times like these.

This is a timely question right here at home. On Saturday people from across the diocese will gather together to elect the next bishop of Long Island. The person we elect will have a profound impact on the Diocese – and St Luke's – for the next 20 years. It isn't clear what that future will look like. What is clear is that the next two decades will be a time of great transition and change in our world, our country, our local community, and our church. The next bishop will have to deal with AI, economic and political shifts, changing demographics and changing patterns of how people go to and support their faith communities. The bishop's role will be to help people find God in the midst of it all, all while helping St Luke's and 129 other congregations from Brooklyn to Montauk continue to grow and thrive.

I hope our new bishop is someone about whom an atheist would say, “I might not share his faith but I stand with him.” I hope our new bishop is someone who would inspire that atheist to check out a local church, to start doing what we are doing and being about what we are about, and in those things discover that he isn't really an atheist at all.

One commentator said this week that the Pope should stay in his lane. The underlying message is that spiritual people should focus on spiritual things. Are not working for peace, welcoming the stranger, caring for the poor and sick, and behaving ethically in our daily lives, spiritual things that he - and we - should be doing every day? The question in the end isn't just about a Pope, or a bishop, or a priest. It is about all of us.