



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

May 14, 2026

Last week I was sitting in a pew waiting for an ordination to start, when another chaplain leaned over to me and said, “I’m really angry that we can’t wear these stoles anymore.” I looked and saw that her stole, like the one I was wearing, featured hand-embroidered Jerusalem crosses. “When I asked what she meant, she said, “Because my troops will think these are Crusader Crosses and think I am pushing Christian Nationalism.”

The stole I wore had been woven by Arab-speaking Christians in Bethlehem. It had been given to me at my ordination by the priest who inspired me to go to seminary and for whom my son is named. Every time I wear it, I feel connected to him, to the place Jesus was born, and to friends whose families have been in the Holy Land since the birth of Jesus himself. While I understand where my fellow chaplain is coming from, I have a different response. I am not going to let Christian Nationalists co-opt my faith, my country, or my church. I am going to keep wearing that stole. I am going to keep wearing my uniform and flying the flag outside my church and singing patriotic hymns inside it for the same reason.

In the words of the Right Rev. Allen Shin, Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of New York and chair of the Episcopal Bishops Theology Committee, “Christian nationalism is a sin. The ideology is not Christian, though it has “appropriated a thin veneer of Christian identity.” Former Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop Michael Curry has written that “Christian nationalism today threatens our country’s soul.” Roman Catholic Bishop Michael F. Burbidge recently wrote said that “The concept of Christian nationalism is not compatible with Catholic teaching.” Methodist bishops agree, saying, “Christian nationalism is not an expression of our faith. It is an abomination to the Gospel.” The General Assembly Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations of the Presbyterian Church states, “Christian nationalism conflates religious and political authority in an idolatrous way, contradicts the teaching and example of Jesus, and undermines pluralism and religious liberty. It also reduces Christianity to a narrow cultural identity over the universal tradition Jesus stands for. The core issue is not the religion itself, but how it’s co-opted for political and nationalist goals.” The Lutheran Bishops are perhaps the most articulate. In their words, “Love compels us to speak clearly against Christian Nationalism, which our Churchwide Assembly named as a distortion of the Christian faith and an unhealthy form of patriotism. Christian Nationalism confuses the Gospel with political power, turns God into a mascot for the state, and privileges some people over others based on race, religion, or birthplace. This is not the way of Jesus. The kingdom of God is not a nation, not a culture, not a political ideology—it is God’s reign of love, justice, and mercy for all people.”

Want to learn more? For a quick primer on Christian Nationalism from the Presbyterian Church, click [here](#). For helpful videos: Episcopal ([here](#)) and Lutheran ([here](#)). As shown in these materials, the best way to combat Christian Nationalism is to focus on Jesus. Dig into your faith. Know your scriptures. Get beyond a Sunday school understanding of God. Ground your actions in the Baptismal Covenant. Become articulate the hope and the belief that is in you. Pray. Participate. Coming to church and attending the Wednesday services, Saturday classes, Sunday adult forum conversations are a great start. Be informed. Be prepared. Don't let others redefine your faith or take it away from you.