

Flagellants roved from town to town.

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“Disquietude”

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How often do we choose to become better? Or does improvement happen when pushed to improve? Do things get better when everything is fine or when things are stressed? Baby bird, content being cared for, discovers how to fly when pushed out of the nest. Snakes molt when they've outgrown their familiar skin. Teams improve by competing against better teams. Superstition and repressive religion yield to scholarship and reason. Disease, unwelcomed, can make you healthier. Our identities mature because of crises at various stages making us anxious. We seek resolution, forcing us to evolve, provided we model ourselves on positive examples, provided we have someone in our corner.

Did you hear that sound? It's the flapping of chickens coming home to roost. Historian Barbara Tuchman wrote about the chaos and discord, plague and brigandage, moral corruption and social collapse of the dark 14th century, for “times of anxiety nourish beliefs in conspiracies of evil.” Flagellants roved from town to town. Royalty practiced wanton peculation, plundering public treasuries. Brutality became the norm, sacrilege of the Bible rampant especially by clergy who abused it for gain.

In that sorrowful, tempested age, the Roman church promoted mother Mary as a means of grace. For Protestants, Jesus' mother Mary isn't a big deal, though some wags remark how earliest Christianity's key disciples were Peter, Paul, and Mary. Worth appreciating, however, is the theology behind her Annunciation, when Luke's gospel tells how a mystical messenger reveals to Mary she's been called to bear Jesus. Mary isn't about gynecology; she represents the spirituality of the incarnate and indwelling Word, which is why medieval artwork portrays this conception as occurring through her ear or by reading. Mother Mary teaches how her reaction follows growth's pattern of Disquietude (“she was much perplexed”), Reflection (“and pondered what sort of greeting this might be”), Inquiry (“how can this be?”), Submission (“Let it be with me according to your word”), Merit (“blessed are you”). Out of disquietude, out of uneasiness, criticism, discomfort, disagreement, even affliction, merit becomes possible. Given selfish humanity, it doesn't always happen, for “misery can give force to impulse.” The key word is ‘selfish’ for self-centeredness distorts natural anxiety into breeding harmful behaviors.

Tuchman's book ends with the invention of the printing press cultivating the spread of literacy and thirst for knowledge. 14th century anxieties gave sunrise to middle class success, then inspiring the Renaissance, inducing contractions of the Reformation, establishing the rule of law not of men.

Sorry, Joe, but your unselfish positive professionalism still is needed to turn anxieties into promise. You're still needed, the way a church might need the return of their weathered, trusted pastor to steady the ship. Wrinkled hands can still hold the tiller firm. Your work isn't done. Navigate us toward calmer seas. We still need a seasoned grownup as pilot. We cannot afford a volatile, seething pirate sailing us toward rocks. I have a candidate I'm proud to vote for – do they?

Once again we must rely on your sense of duty and optimistic confidence in America. We need your team's quality and competence. I bet you imagined enjoying retired time playing rounds of golf. Honest at golf, honest at life. I bet you truly wanted to pass the baton of leadership to talented younger leaders because you thought America would have finally purged itself of Tinkerbell politicians who crave

applause and marooned sinister oligarchs -- Leonard Leo, Koch brothers, Steve Bannon -- who plot for control and profit. People aren't tissues. Servant leaders show real strength by doing the complex job required, inviting policy disagreements, making tough decisions in a disquieted, anxious world, governing for the greater good. Democracy, stressed, requires voters who choose to protect their rights and freedoms within our mutual obligations. If Donald wins, we lose healthcare, voting rights, security, free speech, justice, equality, prosperity. Donald wins, we all lose.

Starting with hypocritical Republican cowardice, unlike gutsy Cheney, and perpetuated by a public swallowing a tidal wave of lies, today isn't how it worked out. I believe Joe banked on America recovering balance enough to shake off today's aberrant, humorless extremists. But we didn't, yet -- well, a choleric minority didn't, yet. Enough with unreflective anger. We yearn for fair winds of faith, hope, and charity. Joe, you're again called to bear the burden of our nation's purpose and win the merit of liberal democratic values. In contrast to Donald's incapacity to care for others and do hard, honest work, Joe fights for those weathering hard times.