

A little more pointed than usual but necessary
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Dog poop needs to be cleaned up.

The Danville News
Robert John Andrews
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“Dog in the Manger”
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It happened, predictably, Sunday following the November, 2016, election. A young woman who worked on the Clinton campaign started crying following worship. Oddly, we had scheduled a church hike that afternoon to the Devil’s Featherbed along Bald Top. Prophetic?

I tried to help her put her tears in perspective. First, I reminded her how she did participate in a successful campaign. Hillary won nearly three million more votes than Trump. Second, I attempted to put the election in perspective from my experience with parishioners who survived heart attacks. Many came to realize that their heart attack was one of the best things that could have happened to them, pushing them into wiser diets and exercise, improved health habits.

While preparing to teach a class to folks interested in becoming Commissioned Pastors, I reviewed strategies for pastoral care-giving. The aim is care. Cure is up to the parishioners facing problems, concerns. Pastoral care begins when pastors remain available to perceive the person’s perspective. Our antennae tingle when people feel and act upon anxieties, guilt, anger, along with distress, dread, alienation. Such behaviors signal unhelpful beliefs (also known as idols). Pastoral care seeks to offer guidance so persons can choose to ground themselves in helpful beliefs. Change in conduct happens from a change of mind, of perspective. What the mind decides, what the mind chooses, actions of heart, belly, gonads, tongue, limbs, follow. This applies to us individually and as a society. Hurt breeds hurt, I’ve heard. Dog poop needs to be cleaned up. I’m an expert.

Where’s your mind at? Does our mind guide us? Very often it’s those other organs that govern us, but only when the mind, the seat of reason and understanding, agrees, gives assent, permits them to get their way.

Following the 2016 election it was worthwhile to ask: What did this election do to reveal us, to wake up America? Where did we fail a segment of our population? What brought on such hurt and pain, anger and disappointment? What gave rise to such negativity? I tried to reach out and explore the motivations for Trump’s popularity. I listened to various voices, received Republican polls, read such books as “Hillbilly Elegy” and “Alienated America.” I prayed that all sides would improve from this result.

Then came the 2020 election. I disagreed but respected the right to vote for Trump, albeit that MAGA is neither conservative nor Republican. Sure, I was glad Trump lost the election, even gladder that Biden won, relieved at Biden restoring competence and statesmanship to our domestic and, especially, foreign policies. Unlike most, I vote on the basis of foreign policy. Domestic issues, Congress dependent, always are a kerfuffle.

That was then, this is now. I'm tired of reaching out to understand, negotiate, excuse, or accommodate those voters who only demand, take, or threaten. It's their turn to reach out, to learn, listen, and compromise, to bravely practice self-examination. Do we really want an America of dread, despair, alienation? Is America okay with syphilis infecting the body politic? Sure, leftist extremists can be nuts, but let's get real about the level of scale. Venereal disease or indigestion? Given the flagrant and flawed convictions (pun intended) driving 2023's naked Trumpism, who can explain how any decision to support this movement can be respected?

How is Trump a failure at life? Let me count the demonstrable ways: Judged a rapist; Snobby self-loathing; Hedonist; Human rights opposing; Extortionist; Inveterate liar; Misogynist; Fact denier ; Malignant narcissist; Rapacious taker; Opportunistic racist; Con-man fraudster; Anti-American; Rampant vulgarian; Anti-Constitution; Cruel retribution; Anti-gospel; Democracy hostile. And a bad sport to boot. He worries me. He's not a well man. Unkindness is the telling tell.

Those rallies offer little that is hopeful, positive, promising, or factual. To borrow from the novel, "1984," they really are 'Indignation Meetings.' We are all so prone to indignation. But then, indignation's easier than solutions. Fortunately, Orwell's story is purely fictional. Orwell's book profiles the ideal mind of a Big Brother Party member as, "An ignorant fanatic, whose prevailing moods are fear, hatred, adulation, and orgiastic triumph." Rabid zealots of all stripes mustn't be considered acceptable.

Do MAGA Republicans enjoy being the proverbial dog in the manger? What do they get out of it? The intemperate and indignant dog barks and barks from the stable manger, preventing horse and ox from eating their meal, not that dog could eat hay. So nobody eats. Everybody goes hungry.

Forget needing good lawyers, Trump could use a good pastor.