

In light of the current socio-political climate, it has become increasingly important for leaders of every ilk to issue constructive comments. Caustic rhetoric by key figures, whether delivered bluntly or with veiled verbiage, has been counterproductive and often assumed by the vulnerable as license for anti-social behavior. We best eliminate the negative by accentuating the positive.

We observe bad actors on the street and shake our heads in sorrow and disgust. However, we need a dramatic change from the top down in how we express ourselves and treat one another, particularly during vigorous national debate. Our children are listening and learning from childish leaders and petty journalists.

Rancor among politicians is certainly not new, nor is hatred and bigotry at every level of society. Indeed these deplorable maladies are as old as humanity itself. But by now we should be grasping that the greatest weapon in fighting hatred is not more hatred. That destructive downward spiral is what we are witnessing in far too many communities.

Our current crisis reveals America suffers from a wide spread, serious spiritual deficiency manifested by inordinate selfishness. We are the richest country on earth, yet we are starving for something we have not been able or willing to identify. In a mad rush to find happiness by acquiring things, entertaining ourselves and getting our own way, too many of us have overlooked or summarily dismissed the obvious answer. The result is an emptiness which may be manifested by fear and hatred.

In his 1961 inaugural address, President Kennedy hinted at the answer when he spit out a line that inspired millions: "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." It was a call to action for sure, but it was also a rebuke to what is at the root of nearly every social, political and economic problem in our society.

Inordinate selfishness is spiritual laziness and is deadly. Buddha said, "Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, people cannot survive without a spiritual life." History, tradition and reason testify to the significance of the spiritual dimension of humanity. Those who understand this reality flourish; those who don't, suffer needlessly. If we neglect our body we become physically ill. If we neglect our minds we languish in ignorance. If we neglect our spirits, we get what we are seeing today in community after community all across America.

There is a direct correlation between spiritual development and learning to love. Someone has said energy flows where attention goes. Now is the time for Americans to rediscover the inestimable value of tending to our spirits. We need to explore what it means to love one another, even those with whom we disagree.

"Love is patient, love is kind, it is not envious. Love does not brag; it is not puffed up. It is not rude. It is not self-serving; it is not easily angered or resentful. It is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."



Victor Kidd, Mayor

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