



My Faith Gives Me Hope

A column by Circle Pines Mayor Dave Bartholomay for the Quad Community Press Newspaper (12/13/2016)

My wife Janis and I recently visited New York City for a short vacation and I posted a picture on my Facebook page of the Statue of Liberty on a cold and windy day. Along with the picture, I added these words:

'Some of my friends see roiling waters and stormy times ahead. But seeing the Statue of Liberty today in NYC reminds me of an important message since 1886. The power of liberty and freedom and good will continues to be the thread that welcomes us and binds us together. Our country will continue to be the beacon of hope around the world and each of us, conservative and liberal and all points in between, will be part of the long lasting move towards a better democracy. The Statue of Liberty remains, and through civility and open discussion, the promises she stands for will continue.'

With more time for reflection, I continue to feel optimistic about our country's future. I realize that when my faith is growing from attending church, or when I witness the talent and kindness of our young people, or when I'm looking at my 90-year old father and realize all of the sacrifices he and his generation have made for our country. I have faith in my spirit, in my community, and yes, in the future of my country!

If you've read my past columns, you know how I often see myself as a 'bridge' between my conservative friends and my liberal friends. Today my liberal friends are panicked thinking that President-elect Trump threatens the very essence of justice in America. And then I think about how eight years ago my conservative friends were likely similarly scared that a new President named Barack Hussein Obama was going to take their guns. Well, as is pretty obvious, they still have their guns, and in four or eight years there will still be justice in America. Because the checks and balances of our Constitution as seen in our history allows and encourages free and open dialogue. I believe that democracy needs all of us to be knee deep in vigorous discussions about where we as a society are going, discussions that include all sorts of viewpoints and ideas. The real risk we face as a country is that we become so polarized, so nasty to each other, that it discourages us and makes us want to just wash our hands of the whole mess of 'politics' and leave the playing field for others. But as has often been said, "Democracy is not a spectator sport.'

So how do you participate and survive, and even thrive, in such a turbulent time. I believe the key is to listen to learn (not just to respond) in order to have meaningful conversations, and to start and build up better relationships with those you may disagree with. To reach 'across the aisle', not in order to compromise your values, but instead to learn more about other viewpoints and perhaps uncover common needs expressed in different ways.

Do you have the strength of character to listen better, to carefully measure your words and body language, to work harder at understanding those who differ from you, and to be sincere in trying to appreciate where the other person is coming from?

My faith is tied to things I cannot see and cannot touch, but yet I believe. That same faith is what gives me hope we can all begin to work harder at listening and learning and growing. And it all starts with you and it starts with me. Today.