Columns
Spirituality



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by Nancy Sylvester

Contributor

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Mitch Albom's column in the Detroit Free Press on June 2 caught my attention. Writing after the jury convicted former President Donald Trump on all 34 felony counts, Albom commented that many feel that this verdict will further divide the country.

However, he states "I'm not sure. It seems that with each passing day, we are actually being united. In fear, revulsion and hate."

He concludes his column with this comment: "We are divided. But we are united, too. United by our intolerance of each other. In that case, it's not our differences that pose the greatest danger. It's what we have in common."

His observation is disturbing and rang true for me. In the days following the verdict, the rhetoric of revenge, retribution and violence for all those who are involved in the unfounded conspiracy against Trump was frightening. This rhetoric was used not just by Trump's loyal supporters but by elected Republican officials whose role is supposed to be to govern the country for all the people and not just one's political base.

Such violent rhetoric might not be used by those who are against Trump, but the intolerance for Trump and his supporters is growing. Those who hate Trump see the jury's verdict as proof of his immoral character and unfitness for office. They are sickened by Trump's greed and lies. They believe that destroying him and his followers is a virtuous option.

And we have months to go before the November elections to listen to ads, commentators and campaign workers arguing harder and harder for their version of reality and who the best person is to move our country forward.

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As I reflect on that, I get a sickening feeling and a sinking one. How will any of us enter this election cycle with equanimity, which Merriam-Webster defines as evenness of mind or balance under stress? Then I was in a conversation with someone who said we just have to be kind.

Be kind to each other. Sounds simple, perhaps simplistic for some, but it might be a good way to enter into these couple of months before things get intense, in order to prepare to engage the election from our most authentic selves.

Words that are associated with kind are generous, helpful, thinking about other people's feelings, not causing harm or damage, thoughtful, compassionate, diplomatic, tender, charitable, unselfish, gracious and neighborly.

All are ways that one might behave if we truly loved one another as oneself as Jesus taught. Doing acts of kindness generates positive energy and is contagious. We need something like that to dissipate the toxic atmosphere we are currently in.

This doesn't address the Trump vs. anti-Trump divide directly, but I do believe it would lessen our internal stress and strengthen our ability to engage others both around the election and whatever the outcome is with greater equanimity. Kindness exercises our heart.

As Christians who follow Jesus' path of love, I know we must bring what we're feeling to prayer. In contemplation, as we let go and open up the spaciousness within, we are drawn to the magnetic center of Divine Love. We begin to see in new ways the reality around us and can respond more out of love than fear. We must take positions and elect whom we believe is the best person. We do so without hating those who make different choices or seeking revenge against them.

Our country is divided, more entrenched than ever. If Albom is correct, what is uniting us is our intolerance of each other. Let us believe that doing acts of kindness will call that perception into question and we'll begin to see in new ways who we can become as a nation.