

June 1, 2020

It has been my practice in Lent for years to meet with our 7th and 8th CFP kids in small groups to talk about whatever they want to talk about. This Lent we only had one discussion and that was with a group of charming, witty, and very intelligent 7th graders that I told you about before because they all raved about an asparagus soup they had on an outing to see a play.

Jack Lencioni our Casa Maria chef was going to make them the best asparagus soup ever for the next time we met, but that didn't happen as we know well.

In that first discussion I asked them what they were reading in their various school districts, the pretty universal answer was, "dystopian fiction."

I had never heard that term and I asked them what it meant. They carefully explained that it described a time in the future, a kind of prediction, when things would not go well for a people, a country. A time when meanings and values that once were taken for granted and assumed to work, no longer worked, a time when life would become pretty bleak.

Little did I know that our dystopian future would arrive in just a few days and that in a few months the full weight of a world that no longer worked, where conventional meanings and values would no longer apply, would become our world.

As is always the case, you do not have to agree with me.

The way forward in our country will be precarious and fraught with danger, there will be monumental setbacks and wrong decisions across the board as the consciousness that creates a problem cannot hope to undo or make the problem better.

The consciousness that created this time in our country has been the dominant consciousness for over 200 years. Our solutions all essentially revolve around power and not strength, our attempts at returning our dystopian world to a new normal are not likely to be effective because our imaginations have had restricted diets for too long a time.

Force of any kind regardless of the nobility of your cause is futile as in an effort to change people's minds much less their hearts. Violent behaviors or words or thoughts on anyone's part only defer the problem until it returns more violent and filled with rage that it was before.

A nation that devolved into a solitary template of life as essentially a contest, a competition, to determine who wins in every and any thing, is a nation starving itself to death by denying its need for ideas and thoughtful consideration of values, principles, and ideals matched with consistent work toward those ends.

Our addiction to understanding our world in the binary categories of winner and loser will not bring us peace, of that there is no doubt.

Jingoism is not patriotism anymore than going to church or claiming a religious ideology makes you a disciple of Christ or being a victim of injustice justifies violence toward anyone or anything.

My hope and my prayer is that those 7th grade CFP kids and their older siblings and their peers will not become disillusioned at the tasks they will be left as we fade from the scene and that they will keep their wits about them and step into the dystopian world we will leave them and make not the utopia some of us imagined as our world, but a real world based on strength not power, wisdom not test scores, and gentleness not force.

Try and be patient and try to touch this world with a gentle hand in what you think and what you say and in what you do, as anything other than gentleness, I suspect in these harsh times, will be self-defeating.