



Franciscan Action Network

Transforming the World in the Spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare

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SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR & ELECTED OFFICIALS

Courtesy of FAN Member Pat Shields-Maher, Associate of Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement

Politics - Integrity, Respect, Dignity & Civility - An oxymoron?

I think that I have finally recovered from the last very negative and ugly political electoral process. It seems from the campaign ads that our elections have diminished to choosing the lesser of “two evils” rather than the best of what America can offer (who has been smeared the least wins). After reflecting on the content of many of the ads we were bombarded with through the media, I am disheartened at the general tone of what we call democracy. We are given negative sound bites that are meant to cause an emotional or fearful response rather than to engage the intellect. When people react from emotion or fear rather than the intellect it seems to me that they will not be challenged to look deeper at the issues to find a more truthful reality. It does not mean that we are not passionate about our views: rather it means that we have come to a greater understanding of why we choose to vote for a candidate or proposition if we but step back and evaluate the more complete picture.

The other thing that disturbs me so much is that we teach our children two complimentary virtues: “*If you can’t say anything nice, do not say anything at all,*” and the Golden Rule: “*Do unto others as you would have done unto you.*” This approach does not change the differences between opposing sides, but what it does do is to bring respect, dignity, integrity, civility to the dialogue. What this election more than any other in recent history told our children is that those are outdated values and that it is okay to “*Say and do anything that will help you win an election.*” I don’t know how you feel about this, but this is not what I consider moral, nor is it fostering a community spirit that brings opposing sides to discuss and create a result that is best for the common good of all. It seems to me that, if you have to tear someone else down to make yourself look good, you have very little to offer in substance.

With a very important election coming up in much too soon a time, wouldn’t it be incredible for a candidate to say: “*This is who I am, the good that I have done, the things I am working on to improve, and these are the specific things that I want to bring to the table to represent you in the legislative process*”? Can we demand integrity and truth in campaign advertising? What I would like to do is to start a grass roots campaign to call any candidate or sponsor of negative ads and tell them that we want to hear positive ads that will lift the American psyche to see what is possible than to increase fear & depression. *Will you join me and call in during the next campaigns?*

The other very negative aspect of this last campaign is the *obscene* amount of money spent (much by special interest corporations) during the process. I think of all the good that money could have accomplished if it was directed toward solving the problems that plague America, like the deficit, poverty, crime, the destruction of the family unit and the list goes on. I would respect any entity (corporation or individual) much more if they publically made a donation toward any of these needs rather than contributing to the negative campaign. I feel that we took a step backward in honesty in campaign funding with the decision of the Supreme Court concerning funding sources and disclosures.

I am thankful to have been born in the United States of America and to have the gifts of life and liberty. I take my responsibility very seriously to help my country, my fellow citizens, and the planet on which we live continue down through generations. I know that you do as well. Let us together begin to demand a return to decency in our dialogue.

Thank you,
Pat Maher
Shingle Springs, CA