

sermon Unitarian Church --

*CPRM
QUEST
Laurie Potter -
Baldwin*

- live up the street (easy walk)
- topic: running for office, the spiritual dimensions
- can be likened to pilgrimage literature (like Joseph Campbell's THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES.....or even John Bunyan's PILGRIM'S PROGRESS.....
- an interesting proposition: one runs for office... and one goes from place to place...(started here in Jefferson Hall)...and you meet people at each of these places...and they ask questions (that is, there is a significant give-and-take... and sometimes you come away having met the challenge...and sometimes you come away wishing you had done better....and sometimes there are opponents at these places...and sometimes one does battle by oneself.....

So this is the meaning behind the title....running for political office is a bit like a journey...or an odyssey....

Sometimes one does this by oneself ... sometimes one is accompanied by someone else or by other persons...and sometimes one even meets hundreds of persons.....THE AMAZING THING TO ME IS THAT THIS IS HOW OUR LEADERS ARE CHOSEN: EVERYONE GOES THROUGH THIS PROCESS.

So, the first point must be that running for political office can be likened to a pilgrimage....over a finite period of time....within a prescribed territory...where there is a particular destination.....

When I was doing it, I kept thinking: is this a marathon run? a 10K...thought: more like a steeple-chase....like a HEPTATHLON... but the athletic imagery is there properly... and the word RUN belongs...

SECOND: I kept thinking about a woman I met on the BIG ISLAND of Hawaii.....who after her husband died....decided to take the Buddhist vows seriously....and went to Tokyo...to study to become a Buddhist priest.....which she is now doing near Hilo, Hawaii....

And the biggest challenge for her was to stand outside, in downtown Tokyo, and in other cities....and stand there with her begging bowl....

I asked her: what happened is that I realized how dependent I am....on the good will of others....you know, that we are not the masters of our fate....

There is this in political campaigning: the candidate really becomes a MENDICANT...

One has to beg for money.....

I WAS NEVER COMFORTABLE WITH THIS....

In fact, this is the #1 reason people don't run for office....

I grew up in Nebraska...and my parents taught me that we were to work for our pay....

we didn't take handouts....

we EARNED our bread.....

Of course, I was told that I WAS EARNING the money because I was working so hard to get elected.....but I was never comfortable doing it....

(example: DID YOU DO THE ASK?

my response: where did we learn to talk like this?)

THEN there is the whole matter of the MENTAL SUBSTANCE, the IDEATION, the CONCEPTUAL SIDE....what is commonly referred to as "the issues..."

This is a very tricky matter....and I'm still trying to figure it out....

1st point: I was told when I ran what the issues would be....ECONOMY, CRIME, IMMIGRATION, and GOVERNOR WILSON....

subset of issues: having to do with CHOICE...
REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOMS...
And this information is based on polling data...

But I'm a strong believer in ORDINARY LIFE PHILOSOPHY....door-to-door evidence...

over 300 meetings with voters...

standing in front of Wal-Mart....doing the
Farmer's Market in Los Osos...

By the end, I thought the issue was GOVERNMENT.... (no one proposed anything....

should be as difficult to get welfare as it
is to get a building permit....)

What was on the Minds of the Voters?

First, an atmosphere...the political atmosphere...
the intellectual context: one of ANGER....

MISTRUST....very negative (as distinct
from being constructive)

Pollsters says: this is what the voters chose...

My evidence: they weren't choosing...but
were UN-CHOOSING....they were
eliminating.....fending off....

-- very much of an ANTI-MOOD.....

so it was a contest about who could be the
most ANTI, as in ANTI-CRIME,

ANTI-GOVERNMENT....

ANTI-IMMIGRANT....

ANTI-WASHINGTON....

ANTI-CONGRESS....

behind all of this a plot: (Kevin Looper: -- a story that can be told....)

Election of 1994 got caught up in the pervasive CULTURE WAR that characterizes American society today...../

if we had more time: war has its roots in the revolutions of the 1960s and early 1970s...
the one group: civil rights...personal freedoms.
(characterize this....)

the other group: remained fiercely anti-communist...through the 1980s....
and with the ending of the Cold War --
total collision course: the civil rights group...
competing special interests....

the other group: still identifying enemies...
but the enemies are within.....

the other group - still talking freedom & equality
What one keeps in one's head..... *competing special interests*

Mabel Gunderson....volunteering nearly every day....

Family members --

Scott Wilson -- told me to keep Todd in my head everyday...

Our grandson....who helped me keep things in perspective....

Oddly: the Dalai Lama -- happiness...

"life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...."

The teachings of Jesus: and one in particular --
Ninian Smart... "when you talk about
Christianity, give them an accurate Chris-
tianity.... tell them that Jesus was TOLERANT...
Examples: the story of the good Samaritan...
the woman at the well....
the many examples of his healing people before
he found out who they were
I had Phil Womble in my head -- "NEVER GIVE
UP"
I had Father Virgil in my head: "the only thing
that God truly condemns is self-righteous-
ness....."
I had VACLEV HAVEL in my head....end of
ideology...a lot of people can't stand it...an d
are making up ideologies to substitute for
the ones that are lost....
I thought about Thomas Jefferson a whole lot...
-- about REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT...

Then, I found my creed:

that that which BRINGS OUT THE BEST IN
US...is preferable to that which demeans
us...

That which truly brings us together is preferable
to that which divides us....

That which gives our young people HOPE....

can be trusted
WE ARE Human First . . .