

Frank Mastrone's Vestry reflection presented Nov. 16th, 2016

When the late night comics spoke for the first time after this years election results came in, they all said "Well, the good news is, for the next four years our jobs just got a whole lot easier.

For a moment, I thought the same thing. "How lucky am I to get to do the reflection only a week after this historic decision in our nation's history." But I was wrong. This is not an EZ situation to reflect upon.

In my reflection, I must start off by saying I was humbled by the words our parish leaders shared at services this past Sunday (11/13/16). We are truly blessed to share fellowship with these fine people.

In my house a lot of energy has been spent trying to **figure out** this recent turn of events. It is as if everyone in our circle was saying "What just happened?"

I have no doubt that many of us have friends and family that supported the republican candidate, and I have been wondering if they were watching the same campaign that I was.

We must also understand that many Americans were probably not aware of the peril their vote has put the civil rights of many of their fellow citizens. It happens. They know not what they do.

...and there were so many facebook posts on both sides; some of them interesting, some startling, and all of them very passionate.

One of my friends posted an old Chinese parable.

Once there was a Chinese farmer who worked his poor farm together with his son and their horse. When the horse ran off one day, neighbors came to say, "How unfortunate for you!" The farmer replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

When the horse returned, followed by a herd of wild horses, the neighbors gathered around and exclaimed, "What good luck for you!" The farmer stayed calm and replied, "Maybe yes, maybe no."

While trying to tame one of the wild horses, the farmer's son fell, and broke his leg. He had to rest up and couldn't help with the farm chores. "How sad for you," the neighbors cried. "Maybe yes, maybe no," said the farmer.

Shortly thereafter, a neighboring army threatened the farmer's village. All the young men in the village were drafted to fight the invaders. Many died. But the farmer's son had been left out of the fighting because of his broken leg. People said to the farmer, "What a good thing your son couldn't fight!" "Maybe yes, maybe no," was all the farmer said.

If this is a reflection, let me reflect.

I stop at Dunkin Donuts on Long Ridge near the parkway a lot on my way to church. This past Sunday I found myself seeing the people behind the counter, who I assume are from some country in the Indian subcontinent, differently. I wondered how they felt about the recent election. I wondered if anyone had said anything unkind to them. I wondered if they were Muslim and if they were at all anxious. I try always to be polite, but I found myself being extra nice this time.

Needless to say I have had gay friends for decades, but this week, when I walked my dog past the house three down from mine on Alpine Street, owned by a lesbian couple with two beautiful Irish setters, I wondered. How were they tonight, I could see the glow of their TV in the living room. I imagined them together on the sofa.

So what did motivate most states to choose the republican candidate?

My guess would be; fear.

It is frightening to so many, to look at a leader and see someone who is not the same color or gender as you.

It must be terrifying to so many to imagine the hordes of people from Mexico, criminals and drug dealers, taking our jobs and sucking up all our benefits.

And don't forget those dangerous refugees coming here who are terrorists. Than they will make everyone pray to Allah and force us to eat humus at every meal.

In Galatians 3:28, Paul says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

But the biggest fear of all is the fear of change. The fear of evolution. Of growth. Of enlightenment. I dare say these are some of the same fears people felt when Jesus taught his message of forgiveness, redemption and love.

I myself have experienced profound change in the last four years, so I think I understand that fear. Fear of how to pay your mortgage, how to put you kids through college or pay for your medications.

I have three daughters and a wonderful wife. Ramona was moved to tears by the support and solidarity she found at St. Francis this past weekend. Not a bad thing.

Yes, both candidates were flawed, and as Mark put it so aptly, they both suggested that the election of the other would be certain disaster for our nation.

Not a wise marketing choice.

In Matthew 24:6-8 we read "And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains."

Birth pains? Perhaps. Could this be the beginning of something great!? Is this a reawakening of political consciousness in our culture? A renewed sense of activism?

In reflecting, I can only think of my girls. My girls are now high school freshman and are acutely aware of the world around them. They are also politically and socially conscious in ways I never was at 14 years old.

They are the future. They will be the leaders when we have all gotten to old and tired to fight. They will stand up for the little guy, and gal, and I know they will do their best to make sure everybody gets a fair shot at life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.