

perform this act without a single reference to any bureaucracy or any official agency.”

He goes on to compare how Europe and America solve problems. He suggests that giving, volunteering and joining are mutually reinforcing and habit forming, what Tocqueville called “habits of the heart”. In Europe he said, they would wait for the King or Prince or Government to fix it. In America, he observed people would form an association and solve the problem themselves.

A community must have adequate “social capital”—physical capital is our physical infrastructure: roads, bridges, and water systems. “Social Capital” is the social networks: the habits of neighborliness and patriotism, the trust we developed with working and relating to others. It is the whole network of reciprocal social relations.

Societies run on reciprocity to some extent. Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t go to peoples funerals, they won’t go to yours.” Successful communities have successful community cultures. Winston Churchill said:

We build our buildings and then they build us.

Likewise, we build our community culture and then it builds us.

COMMANDMENT VIII: A COMMUNITY NEEDS A STRONG COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, INCLUDING A SHARED CULTURE AND SHARED LANGUAGE.

John Gardner says:

“If the community is lucky, and fewer and fewer are, it will have a shared history and tradition. It will have its “story,” its legends and heroes, and will retell that story often. It will have symbols of group identity—a name, a flag, a location, songs and stories... which it will use to heighten its members’ sense of belonging.”

He goes on to say:

“To maintain the sense of belonging and the dedication and commitment so essential to community life, members need inspiring reminders of shared goals and values.”

I am convinced that one of the “shared values” we must have is a shared language. It is a blessing for an individual to be bilingual—it is a curse for a society to be bilingual. We need a common currency so we can pay our debts to each other in understandable form, and we must be able to articulate our differences and celebrate our commonalities. Societies must be able to talk to each other. One scholar, Seymour Martin Lipset, put it this way:

“The histories of bilingual and bicultural societies that do not assimilate are histories of turmoil, tension, and tragedy. Canada, Belgium, Malaysia, Lebanon—all face crises of national existence in which minorities press for autonomy, if not independence. Pakistan and Cyprus have divided. Nigeria suppressed an ethnic rebellion. France faces difficulties with its Basques, Bretons, and Corsicans.”

The United States, in my opinion, is at a crossroads. It must move toward either greater integration or toward more fragmentation. It will either have to assimilate much better all of the peoples within its boundaries, or it will see an increasing alienation and fragmentation. Bilingual and bicultural nations are inherently unstable. We found in the 1950s that “separate was inherently unequal.” But, we must also find that separate is also inherently divisive.

COMMANDMENT IX: THOU SHALT NOT ASK WHAT YOUR COMMUNITY CAN DO FOR YOU. THOU SHALT ASK WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOUR COMMUNITY.

A quality community is one which balances rights and privileges with duties and responsibilities. No society can live on rights and privileges alone, and we have tried too long. Our community and our nation—which nurtured us—now needs something in return. A community must demand some duties and responsibilities from its citizens. We must ask, “What we can do for our community?”

Just as a boat needs a sail and an anchor, a community needs freedom and some restriction on that freedom. Freedom is a wonderful word, but it does not “trump” all other considerations.

Saul Bellow postulates that “America is as threatened by an excess of liberty as Russia was by the absence of liberty.” Those are important words. An 18th century philosopher put it another way: Freedom is the luxury of self-discipline. “America, the Beautiful” mirrors that same thought when it says: “Confirm thy soul in self-control by liberty and law.”

A free republic demands a far higher degree of virtue than any earlier society. It demands a profound sense of personal responsibility, a willingness to govern one’s own passions, a capacity for initiative and self-reliance, a taste for personal independence, and a sustained spirit of civic cooperation.

In short, tolerance in moderation becomes a safety net. Tolerance stretched too far becomes an apathetic vacuum where the holes are larger than the strings are strong—a vacuum which invites the criminals and the narrow moralists rather than the truly moral to rush in.

We cannot ever pass enough laws and ordinances to substitute for a sense of civic virtue. Communities need standards as well as laws. Admiral Nelson, off of Trafalgar, hoisted these words:

“England expects every man to do his duty.” And so must every woman; and yes, every child old enough to feed a younger brother or sister with a long spoon.

COMMANDMENT X:

I shall not give you a Tenth Commandment I give you a challenge instead. I have missed important elements of community. What else is needed for community? Let us have a dialogue right now.

CONCLUSION

An old Presbyterian hymn out of my youth says: New occasions teach new duties. Time makes ancient good uncouth.

Community is both an ancient and modern “good”. But we can no longer take “community” for granted in the United States. We have too much evidence that we are unraveling and becoming unglued. There is too much tension, too much misunderstanding. Too many separate tribes yelling at each other. Our civic dialogue is too often a “dialogue” between the blind and the deaf. It is dangerous and we must attempt to salvage that elusive concept of community.

Subject: Fw: parachute

From former head of the PJ school at Kirtland AFB.

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience!

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, "You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk . You were shot down!"

"How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.

"I packed your parachute," the man replied. Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man pumped his hand and said, "I guess it worked!"

Plumb assured him, "It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today." Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man.

Plumb says, "I kept wondering what he had looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat; a bib in the back; and bell-bottom trousers I wondered how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor." Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time, the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, "Who's packing your parachute?" Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. He also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory -- he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute . He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachutes.

I am sending you this as my way of thanking you for your part in packing my parachute . And I hope you will send it on to those who have helped pack yours!

How this relates to jokes sent to you by e-mail

Sometimes, we wonder why friends keep forwarding jokes to us without writing a word. Maybe this could explain it: When you are very busy, but still want to keep in touch, guess what you do -- you forward jokes. And to let you know that you are still remembered, you are still important, you are still loved, you are still cared for, guess what you get? A forwarded joke. So my friend, next time when you get a joke, don't think that you've been sent just another forwarded joke, but that you've been thought of today and your friend on the other end of your computer wanted to send you a smile... just helping you pack your parachute.....

How this relates to "that small town feeling"

In a “small town,” people know each other, they know what is going on in the town, it is pretty hard to do things that are not considered acceptable without everyone knowing about it, everyone knows the kids, and, if people have a problem, neighbors pitch in to help. There is a lot of “parachute packing” going on. How much “parachute packing” is going on in Golden?

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