

BELIEF *by Kathryn Barlow-Williams*

We can use presidential campaign as a call to prayer

It would be easier to endure this presidential campaign if God had made people like soap opera characters, all good or all bad. Instead, God mixed some good and bad in each of us and seemingly said, "My Spirit will help you sort through the muck."

When Jesus called his disciples to be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove (Matthew 10:16), he made it clear that both a strong mind and an open heart are crucial to evaluate someone's character. To employ one without the other leads to destructive choices and emotional instability. Lord knows, our country could use more loving, reasonable folks.

Instead of heralding our



Kathryn Barlow-Williams says Jesus knew the importance of both a strong mind and an open heart.

candidate's virtues and decrying an opponent's flaws, our time might be better spent studying nonpartisan fact-checking websites. Wading through the half-truths and blatant lies slung around the political arena is no job for the ill-informed.

Our minds need facts and our souls need love to make choices that lead to inward balance and outward stability. If we use the campaign as a call to

prayer, we can grow in divine love instead of getting sucked into a horrifying abyss of hate. As the presidential campaign continues, please feel free to join me in spirit by offering up this prayer to God several times a day.

Lord help us,

The world has gone mad, and we desperately need you. We need your love and your peace. We need divine wisdom and guidance. We need hope. We need a deep, glorious breath of sanity.

Lord, we beg you to inspire our presidential candidates to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the office they seek.

Help us, the American people, not to resign in despair.

Strengthen our faith.

Each time we hear a candidate lie, challenge us to be more honest in our daily lives.

Each time a candidate hurls a vicious insult, remind us to encourage others with compassion. Give us courage to speak for the oppressed and marginalized.

Each time a candidate accuses the other of greed and selfishness, inspire us to look beyond our own needs and to live generously.

Each time a candidate cites how the other has failed on the job, remind us to work diligently with energy, enthusiasm and gratitude.

Each time a candidate denies his or her destructive behavior

by pointing to the other's dirty laundry, force us to take full responsibility for our actions and to ask for forgiveness. Transform our mistakes into miracles of grace to share with others.

Each time a candidate asks for forgiveness but does not change, remind us to be wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove.

God, we pray these things in the name of love so that we can work together to build up your kingdom of love, justice and truth in the world — regardless of who is elected president of the United States. Amen.

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