

**Small Talk – May 10 2021**  
**MN Required Facial Covering**  
**When In Public and Closed Spaces – Day 290**  
**By Michael Small**

Yesterday, gathering with family and friends, we supped with salad, pasta, lasagna, apple pie, ice cream, good drink, and great long conversations, Throughout the night and into the early morning I was challenged to think about who I am and who we all are on this Mother's Day 2021. We are gradually emerging from the global pandemic of 2020-2021. I understand that each of us is uniquely distinct. No one else throughout history has had "my experience" nor me theirs. We all emerge from a complex and very deep story that is ours alone – yet shared. Each of those gathered think differently, but we are moving toward common ground and shared experiences. As the conversations go deeper, the differences may be stark, but we hold together – because of commitment, love, and friendship – and a deep desire to be a family, a system moving forward, and together and separately into the future. Long held assumptions are challenged, new ground is furrowed, and there is delight. For we are willing to learn from one another and ultimately, we are willing to be changed.

Growing up I read, studied, learned about the history of North America, though what I learned was far from all inclusive of the real history. In reality it was a snapshot composed by like-minded people. The image that came forward was that America is a "melting pot" of immigrants who long ago left their countries of origin to seek a better life in this "new world". We were a people who left our distinctiveness behind becoming Americans instead. We did all of this out of a desire to stand united, to be one, to move forward together into a better future. We aspired to be "a house united".

In recent years, a different image has emerged, those who reside on the North American Continent might be better compared to a tossed salad, with many, many distinct and flavorful ingredients. A salad that is sometimes delicious and nutritious and at other times, if not tended well, it can become sour and harmful. If the real truth is told, this tossed salad was already present before the first explorers set foot on an already vibrant and thriving land of deep traditions and advanced varied cultures. There are many parts composing this salad called the United States of America, distinct from one another but somehow trying to find common ground with varying degrees of success and failure.

Seeking common ground and vision. I recall the ancient words "United we stand. Divided we fall." Those words have been uttered in different forms at various times throughout American history. *"Founding Father John Dickinson in his pre-Revolutionary War song 'The Liberty Song', first published on July 7, 1768, in both the Pennsylvania Journal and Pennsylvania Gazette newspapers wrote: 'Then join hand in hand, brave*

*Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall!”<sup>1</sup>. Long ago Jesus said “If a realm is torn by civil strife, it cannot last. If a household is divided according to loyalties, it will not survive.”<sup>2</sup>*

United we stand, divided we fall? What to do? These are perilous times. We are emerging from the valleys of darkness. As you emerge – have the conversations. Go deep. Don’t be threatened by differences. Listen. Seek common ground. Listen. Listen. Listen – truly hear, the joy and pain. Stretch and grow. Be willing to discard the ways of doing things that no longer work or are useful. Let go of the ways it has always been done before. Truly stretch, push, break through boundaries that bind and constrict. Explore new paths. Risk, and when you fail, risk again and again. Find delight in the journey as we move forward walking hand in hand. Put together a tossed salad that is all-inclusive and savor each flavor.

Yum!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_we\\_stand,\\_divided\\_we\\_fall](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_we_stand,_divided_we_fall)

<sup>2</sup> Mark 3:24-25 *Priests for Equality. The Inclusive Bible*. Sheed & Ward. Kindle Edition.