

VDEI USA Team Lesson – May, 2018

It Is Possible to Get Along with Others, pp. 76- 89

(*To Transform Human Relations; To Know How to Listen; Shared Responsibility in Education*)

Opening prayer

Let me not judge a man until I have walked a mile in his moccasins. (Cherokee Proverb)

Lord, Help me to see you at work in people around me.

Your love seeks me when I am lost.

Your love invites me to love others.

Forgive me when I fail to love. Amen.

The Need for New Eyes and a Soft, Open Heart

Richard Rohr provides a useful image for our lesson. He says:

If you wear glasses, perhaps you've experienced receiving a new prescription and suddenly you see the world in a new way. We often get used to "seeing the world" with an inadequate or outdated prescription. It is only when we go in for a check-up that we realize we need a lens update, and what a difference it makes!

Fr. Parent's "Francis" character is troubled by the verbal attack of his son. But luckily, Francis does a serious check-up on himself, and realizes he is "seeing" through lenses that are not helpful – lenses that focus on *his* needs and expectations. He gives himself a new prescription: to be more open to others; to develop sincere respect for others; and to accept eagerly whoever crosses his path without setting down conditions. Over time, everyone in his circle of family and friends notices his transformation. He learns to shed his pride, as well as his sense of superiority and quickness to pass judgment.

Maybe it's time for each of us to do some interior spring cleaning that would make our existing relationships more fruitful, like Francis with his son and family. Maybe it's also time, during this Easter Season, to open our minds and hearts to new relationships that we have never imagined – like Christ reaching out to Zaccheus. Can we strive for a new level of empathy?

Questions

1. What are you holding onto that makes it hard for you to meet some person or people in your life in the place where they are?
2. As Father Parent suggests, think of the positive aspects of these people. How might you acknowledge or celebrate them?

3. How might you recover a relationship that is on rocky ground and headed in a destructive direction (whether it's your fault or not)? When do you use media, and when do you do face-to-face repair work?
4. Think about the Zaccheus-type people who turn you off at first glance. How might you be more open to these people, more inclusive, more empathetic?

Fr. Parent's Francis narrative goes on to describe this parent's discovery that "*...human beings should be respected for themselves regardless of their behavior, or of certain isolated acts by which they express themselves.*" Francis has learned to listen openly and humbly, without passing judgment, and without feeling the necessity to jump in, correct, and "educate" to his way of thinking. His insight is that his "*...way of thinking has become more human and more flexible.*" As such, he is able to overcome the "*...barrier that was distancing him from his loved ones.*"

In practice (and in the world), what does respecting others look like? Fr. Parent reminds us that Jesus is the model to follow. He makes two references. First, he recounts Jesus' adept handling of the trap around the Pharisees' attempt to have him condemn the woman with loose morals, and his clear demonstration of respect for this woman. Second, he recalls the Father's behavior in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Questions

1. Sometimes we show respect with words, and sometimes with behavior.
 - a. Where are you currently challenged (parenting, grandparenting, pastorally, in your work situation)?
 - b. Where have you been successful negotiating difficult situations (words and/or behavior/attitudes) while maintaining respect for all concerned?
2. What are you doing to make your interactions/relationships more human, more flexible?

Closing prayer

Lord, help me to see people with new eyes – Your eyes.

Help me to respect each person as an individual with unique, and not necessarily equal needs.

Help me to see beyond the façade, to seek and to find some one-ness with each person I encounter.

Give me the words and the attitude I need to become more human and more flexible with others.

Amen.