

VDEI USA Team Lesson – June, 2018

It Is Possible to Get Along with Others, pp. 90 - 115

(Everyone is Unique; The Starting Point of Love; A Way of Loving)

Opening prayer

Lord, help us “...to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, to bless those who curse us, to pray for those who persecute us, to turn the left cheek to those who strike us on the right.” (Luke 6:27-29)

Happiness is a function of Interior Balance

Fr. Parent states:

Happiness does not impinge upon us from the outside; it is not an attitude of mind which we go out of ourselves to acquire. It is the interior life which expresses itself and which thrives on good will. (p. 91)

...enemies are incapable of upsetting our happiness if we love them. (p. 92)

Jesus demands heroism in our relations (. P. 113)....If Christ demands love of our enemies or, again, if Christ gives to men and women of good will the strength to attain this degree of heroism, then it must be admitted that such love is possible. (p. 93)

Fr. Parent uses the story of David capturing the spear and water jug from the tent while Saul and his bodyguard Abner sleep to illustrate this heroic quality. David has many reasons to kill Saul, but there is ONE reason not to – because he has been ordained by God. This one reason suffices.

Questions

Consider a double pan balance as a tool or metaphor for this exercise. Your happiness is the dial in the middle – balance is achieved when the two sides are equalized, so that is your goal.

1. Think of a person who is challenging. On one side of the balance, list the things that make this person challenging or difficult for you. On the other side, place the positive aspects of this person. If the balance is off (shifting toward negative), what can you do to add an extra measure of good will - “weight” that will make you think differently, as David did, and shift the balance to equalize the sides (or even shift MORE toward the positive side)?
2. What insights do you have about yourself as you try to find that ONE “heavy” thing that can shift the balance?

Speaker Tip O’Neill was famous for saying “*All politics is local.*” Fr. Parent invokes this idea when he talks about what it takes to make a clean street and a clean heart – personal responsibility. He says:

If every human being takes the trouble to watch over his or her heart, to fill it with goodness, forgiveness, prompting it to live honestly, the heart thus adorned would, without doubt, be capable

of controlling the tongue....To arrive at the stage where each day we are able to say a little bit of good about others would fill our lives with a true and long-lasting happiness. (p. 97)

The question is that of love of neighbor. The starting point is confidence in oneself, which engenders mutual trust....With a little bit of courage and good will, I am able to bring into relief the best, the beautiful, the goodness of others. (p. 107) – to attribute good intentions to others, accepting others as they are and forgiving their wrongs to you – as Christ said, 77 x 7 times.

Questions

3. Does Fr. Parent's assertion hold water? Is this kind of mindfulness and courage a path to long-lasting happiness?
4. What kinds of exercises can we use to "cultivate favorable thoughts," or increase our quotient of good will and capacity to find what is good? (the Father in the Prodigal Son)

Fr. Parent's discussion of constructive criticism advances the idea of adopting "...an attitude of disapproval, but always without aggressiveness." (p. 101). But FIRST, it's important to get to know the person – to be more interested in that person than in oneself, offering the kind of friendship that welcomes and trusts the criticism when it is necessary and helpful to the person, and is willing to accept criticism oneself. He uses the quote from Sirach to express this kind of friendship: *If you find a friend (man of understanding), let your feet wear away his doorstep.*" (Si: 6:36) Later, he describes how he would like others to perceive him:

- a. *To credit me with good intentions;*
- b. *To search to find my motivation;*
- c. *To become conscious of my interior dynamism;.*
- d. *To know me from the inside.*

Questions

1. Who in your life perceives you in the way Fr. Parent describes? How do you feel in the presence of this person?
2. How are you using Voluntas spirituality to become "...a man (or woman) of understanding" – a better friend, capable of constructive criticism?

Closing prayer - Every day is a fresh start.

Lord Jesus, give me the grace to think of you every hour, just for today, so that I may live in your presence.

Lord Jesus, empty my heart of all sadness, hate and spite, just for today, so that I may love without criticizing, and serve without complaining.

Lord, Jesus, help me to follow your footsteps, just for today, so that following your example, and Mary's, I may be, every day of my life, an element of peace. Amen.