

Institute Voluntas Dei - September 2017 Lesson Plan
It Is Possible To Get Along With Other (pp. 11-20)

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Opening Prayer: (+) Lord Jesus, in my desire to get along with others, grant me the courage to take the first step; to accept others as they are without prejudice; to become aware of the quality of our own personal feelings; to desire the creation of positive and serene relationships; to develop respect for the freedom of others; to grow in self-assurance and in trust of others. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen. (Prayer, adapted from Preface of "It Is Possible To Get Along With Others, Fr. Louise Marie Parent, p 11)

Introduction: This prayer, difficult as it is, requires us to put into practice the 2nd set of our Three 5's by checking our attitudes. Do we practice the presence of God; avoid complaining; are we absent of destructive criticism; Do we serve others; and, try to be a peacemaker? In our modern world, we have every opportunity to communicate and build bridges of peace, but ironically we are becoming less tolerant, less conversational and less cable of getting along with people who are different from us. Perhaps, we need impose a daily moderation or a "fast" from all the technology, the 24 hour news cycle, and begin to engage in honest conversation, especially with people with whom we don't naturally feel a closeness or connection. To 'get along with others' Fr. Parents tells us from onset that (a) it *IS* possible (b) it's a disciplined art form that removes unnecessary demands and expectations and, (c) to be positive and generous with our thoughts.

Personal Reflection: This does not have to be shared with the group unless you want to discuss it:(1) *Who do you NOT get along with and why?* (2) *What expectations do you have of them? Are these reasonable?* (3) *Do you have the discipline and courage to generously think positively of them?*

Part 1: Reaching Out To Others: By the incarnation, coming into the flesh, God the Father shows us how he stretches out his hands to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus came into the world to teach us God's peace - the virtue of communion required to enter into heaven. The first step to getting along with others is to do what God did for us: reach out to others. This simple gesture requires humility and maturity, and not the simple repetition of negativity and privatized isolation that we have acquired as habit. If we don't discipline ourselves and make a first step to reach out to others, we could live a sad and lonely life. To take this first step, we need self awareness of the good that God has given to us - a goodness that we are called to share with others. In many cases, reaching out to others can be as awkward as meeting a group of strangers, each with a different background and style of communicating. We suffer feelings of anxiety and insecurity from the awkwardness of not knowing each other. What helps is making sure we know ourselves. The first step, when reaching out to others is becoming our true self and sharing our authentic self with others!

Group Reflection Questions: (1) *When you meet new people, what is the impression you want to give to others* (2) *What goodness has God given to you that you're called to share* (3) *How often do you reach out to others? In what context? And how does that manifest God's presence within you?*

Part 2: Acceptance of Others: When reaching out to others, being the best version of ourselves is more helpful than trying to impress or please others. In other words, don't be fake. If we are more focused on being ourselves than insecurely trying to please others, we can develop the discipline of accepting others for who they are. Fear of being true to ourselves is connected to the sin of pride and the vice of insecurity, which makes us not accept others unconditionally, even though God does that for us. This requires time and patience, an aptitude that will transcend the evil that prevents us from truly reaching out to others.

Group Reflection Questions: (1) *How does acceptance of ourselves reflect in how you accept others* (2) *How is this teaching reflective of how Jesus command, "love one another as I love you?"* (3) *How have you developed the discipline to be patient with other people's qualities and character?*

Conclusion: In these two brief chapters, Fr. Parents gives us key introductory exercises to help us get along with others. These simple thoughts possess profoundly deep truth, such as Jesus' simple command: *Love one another*. We will no doubt fail in our attempt to reach out to others. However, we have one consolation: God continues to reach out to us, despite our falls and our very difficult character and challenging attitude! Psalm 8:4 sums it up beautifully: *"Who is man that you should be mindful of him, humanity that you care for them?"* If we can learn how God gets along with us then we have an incarnate and realistic example to get along with others. Getting along with others doesn't mean we agree or condone immorality, vice or sin. But, it does mean we have to learn how to live peacefully with others in this life - including the sinners and our "enemies." Why? Because that person/sinner we don't like may experience a deep conversion, receive God's eternal mercy, and may be sitting next to us for all eternity at the wedding banquet. If we haven't learned to live peacefully with them *now*, we may not enjoy heaven. And if that's the case, we may *not* be in heaven after all.

Closing Prayer: (Read this scripture passage, offer a moment to offer a silent intention, offer petitions, and conclude with the Lord's Prayer)

"Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation. Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, on your part, live at peace with all" (Romans 12:9-18). *Pause to meditate on what in us needs to change in order to "Get Along With Others."* Also, *pray for those with whom we struggle and don't get along. Conclude by praying together The Lord's Prayer.*