

Being Imperfect Together – 04-30-15

Choosing Deeper Relationship

Clarence Heller, Spiritual Director

(This week we have a special guest columnist who asked to share his vision for how we might relate to each other here at Sts. Clare & Francis, and how we might care for those relationships.)

One of the barometers for spiritual growth is the quality of our relationships with other people, increasing in empathy, acceptance, intimacy and love. Being in community offers opportunities for us to choose to enter more deeply into these relationships. When a member of a community, it is only a matter of time before another member will hurt, disrespect, reject or irritate you in some way, perhaps seriously. This is precisely the opportunity and invitation to grow - by choosing to reconcile.

I have a dream. Namely, that our community would provide not only the opportunities to choose deeper relationship, but also the assistance to navigate those challenges. I have a dream that our ability to grow closer to each other and as a community because of the conflicts that arise will become a defining characteristic of our community. I have a dream that what we can learn in our community about vulnerability, forgiveness, acceptance and love will spill out to improve our relationships with family members, neighbors and co-workers.

A common response to being hurt is to pull back as a form of self-protection - sitting across the aisle rather than next to the person who hurt you, avoiding a sincere hug at the sign of peace, etc. This distancing can spiral over time, expanding to include other members of our community who have hurt us, and weakening our connection to the community generally. We have the skills, expertise and commitment within our community to help us make the choice, over and over again, to move toward rather than away from each other.

I have a dream that Sts. Clare & Francis will form a Relational Care Team of professionals drawn from our ranks who, when one of us is hurt, could offer personalized suggestions or even meet with both parties to facilitate a healing conversation. All of this would be voluntary in every respect and would be approached with reverence and confidentiality. Perhaps it could be a specialized expression of our already-existing Caring Ministry.

If you share my dream, or have comments about it, please respond to Art Maines at a_maines@msn.com.

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