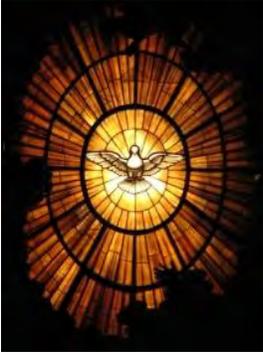


## COOPERATION OR COMPROMISE?



We value cooperation. It's known by many names: teamwork, getting along well with others, there's no "I" in team, social skills, emotional intelligence, you can be right or you can be happy; often times you can't be both.

Cooperation is often confused with compromise. Cooperation is simply working together. By compromising, parties give up a little bit for the sake of agreement or harmony. I really don't like Olympic gymnastics but I will watch it instead of baseball because my wife likes it.

What you sacrifice, however, makes a difference in whether you can defend your compromise. I can compromise on my television-viewing preferences and defend my decision. When principles are involved then your sacrifice is harder to defend.

A principle is a moral rule or belief that helps you know what is right and wrong. As people of faith our principles have their foundation in scripture. A principle is not an opinion, no matter how strong the opinion. Opinions and values, another concept often confused with principles, are not morally-based.

In Sunday's first reading seven brothers were coerced to violate God's law. One by one each refused. One by one each professed a desire to die rather than "transgress the laws." One by one each was put to death rather than compromise their principles. This was a compromise they would not make. The brothers chose death than renounce their faith. The Church's history of martyrs is based on a refusal to renounce their faith, even when the consequence would be to live to fight another day.

The U.S. Bishops advocate for Comprehensive Immigration Reform that embraces five principles (Path to Citizenship, Preserve Family Unity, Expand Visa Program for Low-skilled Workers, Due Process, and Address Root Causes). The current bill passed by the Senate and waiting for House approval provides a very narrow and very lengthy path to citizenship and ignores the remaining principles. Yet the U.S. Bishops support the Senate bill because it does provide some means for citizenship and it does not violate the remaining principles.

Sometimes you make the prudent decision. Other times you know in your heart what the right decision is because God our Father has encouraged your heart and strengthened it in every good deed and word (2 THES 2:16-3:5).

In the Gospel reading, some Sadducees tested Jesus by posing a hypothetical example where following the letter of Moses's law on earth would present a conundrum in heaven. They were testing Jesus's fidelity to Mosaic Law. Jesus's answer was a rejection of adherence to a human-flawed application of the law. Jesus proffered his answer based on the principles of the new covenant.

Rather than compromise his beliefs for the sake of rigid traditional interpretation, Jesus gave a risky answer because it was defensible. (Every word and action of Jesus was, and is, defensible!)

Cooperation is a highly-regarded value. Compromise may be virtuous but that depends on whether it is principally defensible. The wisdom is in knowing the difference, then acting prudently.

(Readings for 32nd Sunday of Ordinary Time)



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