

Faith and Reconciliation

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Faith is “the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). It is an act of the understanding and a divinely infused virtue whereby we accept as true all that God has revealed, because He has revealed them.

It is not enough, however, to hold as true what God has revealed. For faith to be complete, its teachings must be practiced and bring us into a more personal relationship with God. In other words, we must live according to what we believe, so that our faith becomes our response to God’s call to follow Him.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus reveals to us the importance of reconciliation and the extent we need to go to be reconciled. Conflict is unavoidable. Weakness and sin will inevitably find their way into our relationships and we will wrong others, especially those we love. Some folks are such pleasers that they will do anything in their power to avoid conflict, even setting their integrity aside in order to keep the waters calm. Others get defensive when faced with confrontation and immediately set the stage for battle. We all deal with conflict in different ways. Sadly, we often allow our feelings to get bruised and hurt. The hurt, because it’s allowed to fester, turns to anger. We find that the only recourse we have is to “pick up our ball” and go home. In doing so, another relationship gets severed and another opportunity for reconciliation is missed. Have there been relationships in your life that have been severed and destroyed because of things that were said or done that caused deep hurt and resentment?

Human beings can do a number on each other. Words and actions have the power to hurt deeply. Many people part ways because of the inability or reluctance to reconcile. We all carry a little child within that prefers to punish those who hurt us. We want them to feel the same pain as we do and suffer the same isolating fate. When we have been hurt, we want to hurt back. The Gospel, however, doesn’t tolerate this approach. In fact, it’s unacceptable. When find ourselves at odds with another, there are some extremely important questions we must ask and answer. What does this conflict say about me? Why am I feeling the way that I do?

Do you understand that you are a human being who can make poor choices? Our egos can quickly get in the way and our self-focused needs can muck up even the best of seasoned friendships. Believe it or not, with patience, humility, perseverance, and a desire to grow we can work our way through conflicts and reconcile differences. Jesus preferred the one-on-one approach to reconciliation. But he also realized that humans, being who they are, and not always willing or able to see the truth. The intervention of others may be necessary.

Then, there are those relationships that are truly beyond reconciliation. They are most often abusive relationships, physically, emotionally or spiritually. Dealing with this type of conflict, because of the dynamics involved, is best achieved by walking away. Even doing this can come at a great price as those who want to control us are reluctant for this to happen. Unfortunately, not everyone has the psychological or spiritual capacity for wholeness. For many, their brokenness is such that being in any type of relationship will only bring greater heartache, shame or pain. There are some relationships that simply cannot exist.

Above all, every person and every relationship deserves a chance at reconciliation. When olive branches are extended, humility embraced, honesty upheld, love enkindled, and mutual respect exchanged, some powerful “God moments” can be had. Years of painful separation and discord can be healed and divisions cast aside.

The Christian way is the way of faith and reconciliation. Let us pray that Christ may increase our faith and always lead us to reconciliation.

God bless you,

Fr. Anthony Ahamefula