

FROM FATHER DAVE

When I worked for the diocese as the Vicar of Clergy I would at times field phone calls from parishioners complaining about their parish or priest. I would listen to their concern and then I would always respond by saying, “Have you shared this concern with Father?” Nine times out of ten the person would say “No.”

Why is it that when we have an issue with someone, we discuss it with everyone else but them? I think the simple answer is that fundamentally we are uncomfortable with conflict. Instead of addressing the issue, we can tend to go to everyone else, but the person involved. History has shown, however, that when there is engagement in the face of conflict great things can happen.

In the Gospel today Jesus lets us know that if we have an issue with someone we need to go and share it with them alone. When there is hurt involved this is not always easy. Somewhere after hurt, there can be anger. Both of these realities make confrontation challenging. Nevertheless, when we go to that person that we struggle with that is the Christian way.

So how can we best confront the person with whom we have an issue? One of the first things we can do is begin by praying for them. Over time prayer can diffuse the anger and hurt. The second thing we can do is to collect our thoughts by simply writing them down. We need to put into writing our feelings in the form of a letter. No one needs to see this letter as it is simply an exercise to collect and refine one’s thoughts. The third thing we can do is attempt to put ourselves in their shoes. We have no idea what they might be dealing within their life. Sometimes there is a context to things that can preclude one from taking things personally. Finally, we need to courageously and in a non-defensive way attempt to have a conversation with the person. Timing is everything.

Many years ago, I attended a communications workshop. In that setting, they offered a formula for these kinds of conversations. The formula is “WHEN YOU...., I FEEL....BECAUSE...”

As we begin this new month of September which in many ways signals a new year, let us together resolve to not run away from those who hurt us and talk about that hurt with others, but rather meet them so that we can grow together. At the end of the day, we are all works in progress and God is not finished with us yet.

This is the final week of the satisfaction of the outstanding First Holy Communion Masses. Congratulations to all of our First Communicants. The following week we will begin conferring the Sacrament of Confirmation on the candidates over a series of dates. Please pray for them as they prepare to receive the Holy Spirit and be fully initiated into the life of the Church.



This week also contains two special Marian celebrations. Tuesday, September 8, is the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There is no better way to honor Mary on her birthday than to pray the Rosary. I invite all of our families to pray the Rosary that day.

Saturday, September 12, is the Most Holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I invite everyone to place a statue of Mary in your windowsill as we pray for an end to the pandemic and continued good weather for our outdoor Masses.

Finally, Friday, September 11, is the 19th Anniversary of the September 11 attacks. I think we all knew where we were on that day. Life, and for that matter travel, changed forever. We will never forget the loss of so many innocent lives. May they rest in peace. May their families know God’s comfort and consolation. And may God, through the intercession of Saint Michael the Archangel, protect all of our first responders—paramedics, fire-fighters, and police officers.

