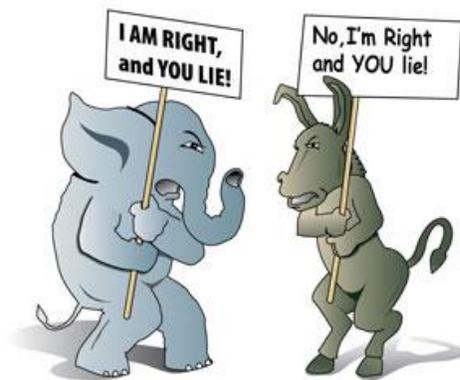


How would you describe the atmosphere of conversation and treatment of each other in our current culture- civil and respectful?

In 1996 issue of the US News and World Report had a cover story entitled, "The American Un-civil War." Its subtitle reads, "How crude, rude, and obnoxious behavior has replaced good manners, and why it hurts our politics and culture." The image tells it all.

"The American Un-civil War"

"How crude, rude, and obnoxious behavior has replaced good manners, and why it hurts our politics and culture."



According to a poll, a vast majority of Americans feel their country has reached an ill-mannered watershed.



The country isn't merely polarized; it's now "affectively polarized" - a term that social scientists have for describing when people don't merely disagree with one another, they actively DISLIKE one another. They dislike each other freely. They dislike each other frequently. And they even dislike each other with pride. They take satisfaction in showing rudeness to those that are different.

Why am I saying this? How can I live out the commandment to love in our current culture of incivility in a nation affectively polarized?

All of us are gifted. MY GIFT AS A PRIEST is my ability to dance with my congregation which is you,



or to co-create with you a context in which all of us can talk, listen and learn about God, and that this gift works as long as I stay open and trusting and hopeful about you. In order for that to happen, I must have a great relationship with you.

There are days when things go so well here at CTK that I believe that I was born to be a Pastor. Last Sunday (some of you were here) we had 2 dozen clergy from different denominations, 4 bishops and such a wonderful and meaningful liturgy with some of the best of our music we have ever produced (we even surprised our protestants- who asked me are- they your choir?), Fr. Brian Timoney said, in the history of ctk this even would remain as one of the great moments. I felt so proud and tall. But when things go poorly, I ask myself why the heck did I ever come here. Mind you. It is the same self- that does brilliantly one day and an absolute failure another day.

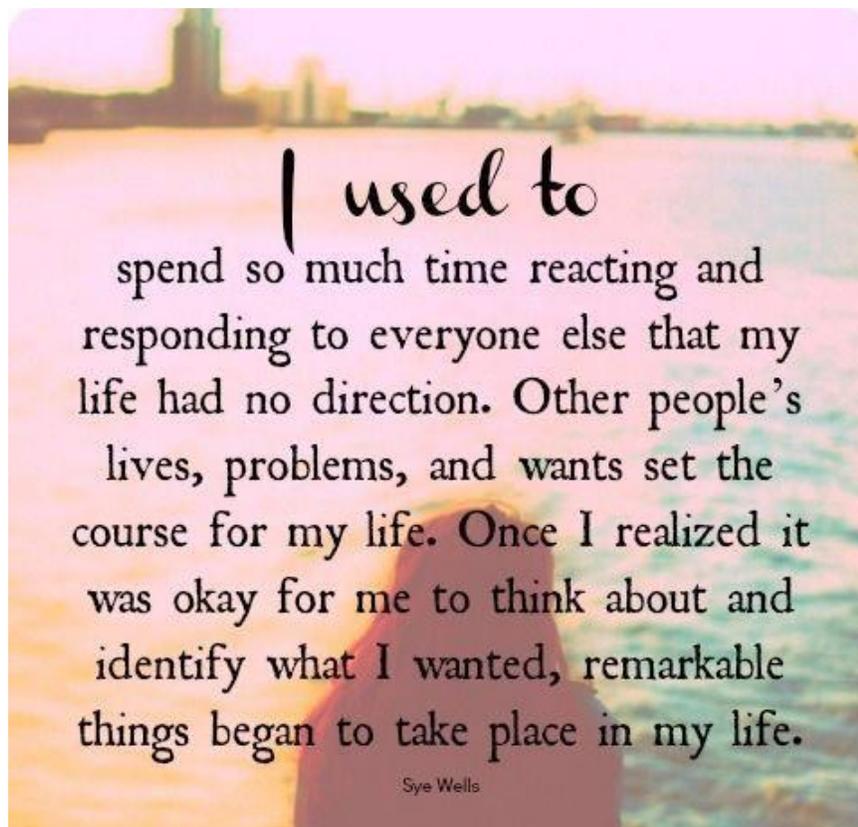
That is, when my congregation refuses to dance with me,



my strength turns into weakness. I get angry, although my relational nature keeps me from expressing my anger in clean and open ways. I become silently resentful, I stop communicating with you and start stepping on the toes of my unwilling dance partners, occasionally kicking their shins. I become crude, rude and obnoxious. What is amazing is that it is the same self- one that can relate to someone so well in our lives and the same self that not only disagree with others but also dislikes them with pride.

We have to realize the fact that our sense of self is so deeply dependent on others that I will always suffer a bit when others refuse to relate to me or agree with me or outright reject my ideas; there is no way around that simple truth.

To become a better human person, I must nurture a sense of self that both does and does not depend on the responses of others. Can you close your eyes right now. Think about a situation where you were rude with some one- Where did this happen? why were you rude? What did you say? Why did you say it? I would like you to place your right hand over your heart now. How did you feel in your heart? Angry? Bitter? Sad? Humiliated? I would like you press your heart with your hand. How do you feel now? You may open your eyes. The question is not how am I going to fix this situation. What is important is to get a better understanding of our inner selves, the inner child, how it works and how it feels each time and then do some real parenting or self-care of your inner self. We need some self care. I would like you to read with me.



How many times have you heard a misrepresentation of self-care? Yes, I am taking care of myself. "I just bought a great pair of shoes!" "I just went on an awesome vacation!" "I just bought my first motorcycle!" While none of these are wrong and are another part of self-care, we need to pay attention to our inner selves that needs more than a vacation or other stuff to heal and be whole.



"Self-care is never a selfish act - it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others."

- Parker Palmer