

August 22, 2019

“Our mission is to celebrate God’s transforming Love in Jesus, by following where Jesus’ Love is calling us to serve the community”

On Sunday, August 25

- 9 am Sung Eucharist -
- 10:00 am Coffee Hour
- 2:30 pm Service at Lakeside Manor
- 6 pm AA meeting

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- “Listening” article from Fr Bill Baker
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- Save the Date events list.
- September service schedule and Fr Bill’s vacation schedule



Ascension This Week

Listening — from Fr Bill Baker

I realized that I have written about in my newsletter article and made reference in at least one of my sermons to a technique to help engage those folks who say prejudicial or offensive things about other groups, but that I had not given any examples of how to use the technique. I want to use this article to reiterate what I wrote before and then give a personal example from my own life.

The basic idea of the technique is that if someone says something offensive that we try to understand where they are coming from and listen to their experiences. In a former article I mentioned something that I heard when I was a child, “That Jewish people are cheap.” If we encounter someone who says that we need to attempt to always remain calm and then ask where the person heard the information that they learned about another group. With this in mind I want to share this experience.

When I worked in Social Services I was employed by a non-profit organization that built low-income housing for survivors of domestic violence. I had a co-worker named Warren. I worked on the social work end of things, trying to connect my clients with services and support. Warren worked on the property management side of things, keeping the buildings looking nice and running smoothly, but also, when necessary, compelling our tenants to pay the rent.

Warren lived in a nice house in Long Island, but he grew up in Brooklyn. Once when we were visiting one of the permanent housing sites in Brooklyn, Warren drove us down a street with a huge house that he owns. It used to be his grandparent’s house, but he cut up the house into individual room that he now rents. I think that might be illegal, but I just listened. Then Warren said something that surprised me. “I try not to rent to Black people. I rent the rooms to Mexicans because they are used to sleeping 10-to-a-room in their country.”

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We worked for a non-profit organization that helped those in need. I wanted to scream. How could he say something so insensitive and wrong? Instead of reacting, I used what I knew. I asked him, "Where did you hear that? How many single Mexican men do you think lived 10-to-a-room in Mexico?" He seemed equally surprised that I called him out, but I wasn't rude to him.

I don't remember the rest of the conversation exactly, but we did talk it out. I think I shared that I was in a relationship with a man born in Mexico and although the houses were different than ours, most houses are just occupied by one family, even if the parents were in one bedroom and the children in another. I told him I loved Mexico. I humanized some of the people he rents rooms to.

Warren realized that what he said was wrong. I think he rationalized his current situation as a private landlord by saying the stereotype about the people from Mexico because now they lived in his cramped, potentially illegal, boarding house. If you say it is something they are used to, it is easier to continue to exploit them. I think we also discussed how hard-working many of his tenants were, from his perspective, and that they were always on time with the weekly rent payments. This conversation was not easy. I am proud to say that I never accused Warren of doing anything wrong.

Instead, I listened to him and discovered that he actually held mostly positive perceptions about his tenants and Mexicans in general. However, I do remember for the rest of the time that I worked for that organization, Warren would introduce me to people and tell them to be careful what they said around me. I actually think he meant it in a good way. And, most importantly, Warren never said anything insensitive around me again. I hope he learned something from our conversation.

I don't fool myself into believing that Warren never said any other insensitive remarks before or after that day. I am sure he said a few around me before this day, but this was the first time I spoke to him about it. But even though he said some insensitive or prejudicial remarks, he also had a soft spot in his heart. Warren, before we started proceedings to evict a tenant who was behind in her rent, he always asked if there was a program that they could be eligible for to help them pay the rent.

I believe all people are little like Warren, myself included. We hear prejudicial comments. Some of them we forget, but sometimes we believe them and even repeat them. However, I am guessing that even the person who we believe to be the "biggest racist" has a soft spot for his grandchildren. We just need to help them see that ALL people are someone's grandchild or child.

This process takes a good bit of courage. I never really want to interrupt someone or confront someone's prejudicial statements, but we all need to be willing to do it in the image of Christ. After we ask some probing questions and listen to where the person is coming from, we get an opportunity to humanize a group that is misunderstood and often discriminated against. By committing to do this we get to help or friends and family who don't know or understand a certain group of people and help them to reframe the prejudice that they have learned. Happy Listening!

Blessings, Fr Bill+

Take A Chance—and Help the Church “Summer Raffle” at Church of the Ascension



This year, instead of our annual yard sale, we are introducing our first “Summer Raffle”.

Raffle tickets are \$20 for a book of five tickets or \$5 for each individual ticket.

And what are the prizes?

First prize = \$500
Second prize = \$250
Third prize = \$100

Winning tickets will be drawn at the Annual Ascension Picnic on September 15, 2019 following the 10 AM Eucharist Service.

Winners don’t have to be present to win, but please join us on September 15 for Mass and for the picnic.

Tickets are available at the church or you may contact Roy Williamson, (718) 448-9508.

Return your tickets and contributions at Sunday or Wednesday church services or mail them to the church:
Church of the Ascension
1 Kingsley Ave.
Staten Island, NY 10314

All tickets must be returned before the picnic on Sunday, September 15, to be eligible to win.
Call (718) 442-4187 for more information.



Save the Date: Upcoming Events for Richmond Episcopal Ministry:

Ascension's "Summer Raffle" fundraiser is in progress now and continuing until September 15. Tickets, \$5 each or \$20 for a book of 5, are available at the church or you may contact Roy Williamson (718) 448-9508. The winners—first, second and third prize amounts—will be drawn at the Ascension church picnic on September 15. See flyer in this newsletter for details.

On Sunday, September 15th, please join us in celebrating Fr. Bill's first anniversary with us. Ascension will host a joint **Anniversary BBQ and Annual Picnic** immediately following 10:00 am mass on the church grounds. We will welcome our brothers and sisters from Lakeside Manor!

Saturday, September 21: Please join us at **5:00 pm on Saturday, September 21**, and every third Saturday of the month for a **healing service at Ascension.**

Sunday, October 13: Annual Oktoberfest dinner at Ascension.

Service Schedule thru September

August 25: one service, 9am

September 1: one service, 9am

September 8: one service 9am + baptism of Geri Swanson's granddaughter

September 15: one service, 10am—church picnic follows

September 22: 8am and 10am services resume

Beginning Tuesday, August 20th, Fr. Bill will be on vacation until September 2nd. For pastoral emergencies, please call Fr. Mark Brown at 617-620-7346.

"Brother, Give Us A Word." Every day, on the Society of St John the Evangelist (SSJE) website, one of the brothers gives a word that we might use as a focus in our prayer and meditation.

"Respect": *"Following Jesus informs how we view people and ourselves. Rather than restricting people and taking offense, following Jesus invites respecting people, supporting and encouraging their development."*

— posted May 29, 2019. You can see a full page of comments on this word on SSJE.org.

