

Sisters of Bon Secours



Just Peace Formation in Nonviolence

An initiative of Bon Secours USA

October, 2016

Nonviolent Civil Discourse

For over a year now, we in the USA have been exposed to a daily diet of toxic language as our presidential candidates debate, speak on talk shows, give interviews and run campaign ads. It has become commonplace to hear insults, interruptions, talking over, name-calling and demeaning language – all forms of violence – as we prepare to elect our next president. One may wonder how we can possibly engage civilly when we encounter those who hold a different opinion than we do whether in the political or other arenas. We may even decide to not engage at all.

This last month before the presidential election offers us an opportunity to focus on and practice civil discourse – nonviolent

communication. No doubt we will have abundant opportunity for practice as we near November 8.

In a recent reflection for the Franciscan Action Network entitled *On Civility in Public Communication*, Albert Merz OFM writes:

“Of particular concern in our current political environment is how we are talking not “with” but “to” or “at” each other. We certainly, as a whole, have not been deserving of high marks for civility. Perhaps we are not fully aware of the power of our choice of words, our tone of voice, or our attitude of righteousness that comes across.

One of the consequences of incivility in how we talk “to” or “at” each other is alienation. People are pushed apart

rather than pulled together. The roots of solutions to society’s problems have to be found in common ground. It is almost impossible to find this common ground in a non-relational environment.

The more threatening consequence of incivility in how we talk “to” or “at” each other is that it can become a “seed of violence.” To read the full reflection [click here](#).

Finding a point of connection appears to be key if we desire to grow in the practice of nonviolent communication. As you continue to discuss political issues notice if what you say creates a point of connection or creates distance. A good conversation starter might be: *What gives you hope? What do you most deeply hope for our country?*

Habits of the Heart

In his book, *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Parker Palmer writes in a similar vein as Albert Metz. Palmer offers five habits of the heart that will help us cultivate a connection as we relate to others, especially when we have opposing views.

We commit ourselves to furthering Catholic understanding and practice of active nonviolence on the road to just peace.

Nonviolence and Just Peace Conference, 2016

The Congregation of Bon Secours made a generous donation in support of this

FORMATION IN NONVIOLENCE

Cultivate Parker Palmer’s five **Habits of the Heart** this month.

1. An understanding that we are all in this together
2. An appreciation of the value of “otherness”
3. An ability to hold tensions in life-giving ways
4. A sense of personal voice
5. A capacity to create community(connection)

Listen to Parker Palmer speak about the five habits of the heart.

<http://www.couragerenewal.org/habitsoftheheart/>

By way of review...

For the past month we have been practicing being compassionate toward ourselves rather than being judgmental.

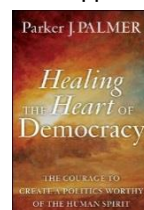
Did you notice when you were being judgmental? Were you able to offer yourself compassion? What changed for you? Keep up this practice.

Suggested Reading:

The Nonviolent Life by John Dear is now available in the Retreat and Conference Center Book Store, Marriottsville, MD.

“THE civil discourse we need will not come from watching our tongues. It will come from **valuing our differences** and the creative possibilities inherent in them.”

— Parker J. Palmer
Healing the Heart of Democracy



<https://www.amazon.com/Healing-Heart-Democracy-Courage-Politics/dp/047059080>

