

7/18/10

As you may know, Michael and I are leaving SSYM at the end of the month. The youth ministry was cut out of the budget of the five parishes that previously created and supported this ministry. Most of the volunteers who have rallied around SSYM over the years will remain, but the paid positions have been eliminated. It has been a joy to share this column with you. Next week will be my final contribution to the bulletin.

I shared at mass last week that Michael and I often receive affirmations for our commitment to the ministry, but we see how much we have received. Our gratitude goes out to the board members, supporting families, the teens, and the pastors. We have grown immensely through this opportunity to help create and serve SSYM. Leaving any job can be tough. Over the years, there have been numerous sources of personal encouragement. But, there always seems to be at least a few people who are not your greatest fans. In public ministry you face plenty of gossip, or even direct discouragement. When departing any endeavor, if you face the “good riddance” attitude, I offer you this encouragement.

Think about the times in your life when you were impatient or unkind toward others. How did God treat you at that time? I often find that the moment I learn principles of the faith or new insight into moral living, I am not only quick to share them, which is good, I am also impatient with others, expecting them to live up to these newly acquired standards of mine. Here is an example.

There was a time in my life when cursing was my second language. People would challenge me but I was not yet ready to grow in that way. Although God did not withhold the truth from me, He was patient with me, showing me mercy, and love. It took me a while to break that bad habit. I was driven from the truth by many sanctimonious preachers who put the principles of the truth before the development of the person. People who got in my face demanding that I “stop cursing now” were not helpful, but strangely, that is the kind of person I became.

After I outgrew this vice, I began to challenge others whenever I would encounter this behavior. My disposition was demanding, impatient, and condescending. I lost touch with the fact that in order for the Holy Spirit to work on that area of my life, He first had to heal some anger and fear.

So whenever you encounter your cheerleaders, be grateful, and whenever you encounter the overly critical, the ungrateful, or maybe just a person with a bad habit that you find particularly agitating, be patient with them and kill them with kindness and love. If God is patient and tender with me in my weaknesses, how can I be anything but that with others?

Peace,

Greg