

Christian Principles of Communication

GOD'S GIFT

- ◆ *Communication → Community → Communion → Common Unity With Christ.*
- ◆ *Communication is a means of grace as we share with one another according to the love and wisdom God has given us through the Holy Spirit*
- ◆ *It enables each of us to receive Christ through others as we share Christ with them.*
- ◆ *It establishes our commonness as sinful mortals who are unable to redeem ourselves.*
- ◆ *It kindles an appreciation and respect for each other's differences and unique qualities.*
- ◆ *God the Father first communicated with us through the act of Creation, giving of Himself in creating humankind in His own image.*
- ◆ *Christ communicated with us through the act of incarnation, "Being in very nature God, (He) did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness....He 'emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.'" (Phil 2).*
- ◆ *Christian Communication is meant to embody and testify to the nature of Christ, including His oneness, reconciliation, equality, justice, freedom, harmony, peace and love.*
- ◆ *It is conscious of and shows respect for God's mysteries, that God's ways can never be grasped, let alone be explained.*
- ◆ *It consciously reflects our human sinfulness, frailty and inadequacies, not arrogantly claiming to absolute knowledge which is the sole province of God alone.*
- ◆ *The communication of Christians is ultimately meant to glorify God; it is an act of worship, a praise of God through the shared word and action of a community living in the consciousness of God's presence. Christian communication is challenged to witness to God's transforming power in all areas of human life.*
- ◆ *Christian communication "rejoices in the Lord always, letting gentleness be evident to all." (Phil 4)*
- ◆ *It springs from thoughts that are focused on "whatever noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable ... anything is excellent or praiseworthy. (Phil 4)*
- ◆ *Christian Communication does "nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility considers others better than yourselves; (looking) not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. (Phil 2)*

OBSTACLES TO CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

- ◆ *PRIDE: "Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited." (Romans 12:16) Pride always distorts how we say things and how we hear them, twisting words and intentions to suit our own conceit or defensiveness.*

- ◆ **VENGEANCE:** “Do not repay anyone evil for evil.... Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.” (Romans 12:16) Revenge is a brazen act of stealing from God. When we act as judge, jury and executioner, we deny the very redemption we have through Christ's sacrifice for us on the cross.
- ◆ **DISCORD:** “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.'” (Matthew 15:19-20) We don't usually intend to sow discord, yet do so out of neglect and thoughtlessness. Discord is sown when we forget about God's call to unity and justice, and allow the discontent and rancor in our own hearts to contaminate what we say and what we hear.
- ◆ **AMBITION:** “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:24-26) How often do we deceive ourselves into believing our own selfish ambitions are somehow “God's will?” When we lock into our own goals, our own ‘program’ we lock out the Holy Spirit. God works through our humble surrender to His will and never through our own ambitions.
- ◆ **SELF GLORIFICATION:** “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” (Matthew 23:11-12) Glory is God's alone. Our self-esteem comes from the fact of God's unconditional love for us. He created each of us as uniquely gifted and called individuals whom he redeemed through the sacrifice of His Only Son, and adopted as His beloved heirs to the riches of His glory. When we claim glory or credit for our own actions or accomplishments, or as our due because of our nationality, race, gender, politics or social position, we deny what Christ has done for us and choose to usurp a fool's inheritance.
- ◆ **IMPATIENCE:** “Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if you will bow down and worship me.’” (Matthew 4:8-9) The end never justifies the means. Whenever we turn to the ways of the world in order to accomplish Christian objectives, we end up poisoning the Gospel message. Laziness and impatience go hand in hand. Christ could have saved a lot of time and pain by calling on legions of angels, raising up stones to praise Him, even stepping down from the cross. But he chose to drink of the cup His Father gave Him: “not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 26:39)

RUMORS AND CONFIDENCES

- ◆ The rumor mill does not grind on its own. Through the efforts of many it ruthlessly tears at the fabric of unity and breaks down the Christian Community.
- ◆ A rumor begins when details are shared that do not need to be shared.
- ◆ A concern or request for prayer can be shared without details such as names

- ◆ *If spiritual direction is needed, a pastor is ordained and devoted to keep confidences and share the wisdom of the Holy Spirit*
- ◆ *The rationale is often "I only told "so and so" and they won't tell anyone else, I'm sure." Funny, that's the same thing thought by the person who share the confidence with you...*
- ◆ *Betrayed confidences hurt people and divide the Body of Christ*
- ◆ *Asking for prayer is a bogus excuse for breaking a confidence or sharing unnecessary details*
- ◆ *Curiosity is a selfish counterfeit for concern*
- ◆ *Prying is only motivated by dishonorable intentions*
- ◆ *The "Truth" is Christ, not the indiscriminant broadcasting of facts or opinions*
- ◆ *Discernment is inspired by the Holy Spirit; judgments and opinions come from the human vanity.*
- ◆ *We are not called to pray that God will change others, but that He will change us in order that we might be channels of His grace in the lives of others.*
- ◆ *Compassionate silence is often the clearest means of communication*
- ◆ *St. Francis said, "I preach the Gospel every day ... and sometimes I use words."*
- ◆ *We cannot hear God or others over the din of our own thoughts and words*
- ◆ *The best advice we can give is to ourselves*
- ◆ *Assume the misunderstandings and mistakes of others are unintentional and innocent of any malice. To do otherwise risks planting the seeds of intent and malice in your own heart.*
- ◆ *Neither assume that what you hear, even from the "most reliable source" may not be "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Your source's source may be flawed. Everyone filters what they hear and see through their own flawed brain – even the courts consider "eye witness" accounts to always be suspect. Even tape recordings can be distorted and no human memory is infallible.*
- ◆ *Seek the Lord when you are confused. Trust His providence and grace. Release to Him all your frustration, anger, and fear, and open your heart and mind to His faithful wisdom, love.*
- ◆ *Remember that you are not God's appointer "fixer of all problems." Often what we perceive as problems, God intends as growth, as opportunities to manifest the power of prayer, as means of grace and direction, or as simple exercises in faith.*