

I read an excerpt last week from Howard Zehr's, *CHANGING LENSES: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FOR OUR TIMES* (Herald Press, 1990, 2015). He was writing of the challenge of living a restorative way of life. This is our challenge as disciples of Christ in the midst of divisive politics and racial inequality in this moment of our lives. And one of our old treasures – the Sacrament of Reconciliation is SUPPOSED to be about this. When we celebrate this sacrament, we are returning to God, to our faith community, and to our best selves. The problem is that we clergy have often simply stressed the confessing part. And while that is an important first step, true repair and restoration (reconciliation) take much more than a bit of penance and a handful of Hail Marys, not that those aren't fine places to start. Zehr suggests that we need to find the courage to take the example of Jesus seriously and think about how we can make all the justice we seek restorative, especially for the 'least of these.' Below are his suggestions:

TEN WAYS TO LIVE RESTORATIVELY

1. Take relationships seriously, envisioning yourself in an interconnected web of people, institutions, and the environment.
2. Try to be aware of the impact – potential as well as actual – of your actions on others and the environment.
3. When your actions negatively impact others, take responsibility by acknowledging and seeking to repair the harm – even when you could probably get away with avoiding or denying it.
4. Treat everyone respectfully, even those you don't expect to encounter again, even those you feel don't deserve it, even those who have harmed or offended you or others.
5. Involve those affected by a decision, as much as possible, in the decision-making process.
6. View the conflicts and harms in your life as opportunities.
7. Listen, deeply and compassionately, to others, seeking to understand even if you don't agree with them. (Think about who you want to be in the latter situation rather than just being right.)
8. Engage in dialogue with others, even when what is being said is difficult, remaining open to learning from them and the encounter.
9. Be cautious about imposing your 'truths' and views on other people and situations.
10. Sensitively confront everyday injustices including sexism, racism, and classism, as well as other examples of systemic and intersectional in justice. (p. 257-258)

I believe that as Catholics, we should be leading the way in softer communication, more respectful dialogue, and a deep concern for the common good. This is the way of the gospel, the way of Christ, the way of His disciples.

This weekend we hear beautiful words from St. Paul's letter to the Philippians which also guide us: "Think about these things: whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you." (4:7-9)

Thank you for all that you do to share the good news of justice, peace and reconciliation with our beautiful but broken world.....