

Pastor's Column

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A Discipline of the Heart

Hopefully, we see our journey of life as a spiritual journey. We are a people who have come from “somewhere,” and we are a people going “somewhere.”

We have purpose, meaning, and destiny. In our modern world, filled with so many distractions, we can easily get “disconnected.” We become lost, frightened, and we act out accordingly.

October, in the Catholic Church, is “Respect Life” month. We take time, in a special way, to weave the connections between all life issues. We are a people who believe that life is sacred from womb to tomb. We do not pick, choose, and say life is important “in this situation,” but not “in that situation.” We are called to develop a consistency in our approach to all life issues.

The very first step, though, is to take time, with and for ourselves. We need to get “in touch” with life.

It is very obvious that neither major political party in our country is “pro-life” in the Catholic understanding. Before we can advocate political changes to create societal laws that are “pro-life,” we must be “pro-life” in our heart. The personal conversion must take place first in us, and then through our example and witness, we begin to make changes in the world around us.

A society that truly respects life will, ultimately, come about not politically, but spiritually, one person at a time through a conversion of the heart.

To keep focused, we need to be disciplined. I share with you the words of Fr. Henri Nouwen, taken from *Letters to Marc about Jesus*:

A Discipline of the Heart

The spiritual life demands a discipline of the heart. Discipline is the mark of a disciple of Jesus. That doesn't mean, however, making things difficult for yourself, but

making available the inner space where God can touch you with an all-transforming love. We human beings are so faint-hearted that we have a lot of trouble leaving an empty space empty. We like to fill it all up with ideas, plans, duties, tasks, and activities.

It strikes me increasingly just how hard-pressed people are nowadays. It's as though they're tearing about from one emergency to another. Never solitary, never still, never really free, but always busy about something that just can't wait. You get the impression that amid this hurly-burly, we lose touch with life itself. We have the experience of being busy while nothing really seems to happen. The more agitated we are, and the more compacted our lives become, the more difficult it is to keep a space where God can let something truly new take place.

The discipline of the heart helps us to let God into our hearts, so that God can become known to us there, in the deepest recesses of our own being. This is not so easy to do; we like to be master in our own house and don't want to admit that our house is God's house too.

In this month of October, as we celebrate and respect the gift of life, may we remember that creating respect for life in our world today begins with each of us in our own lives and hearts. We must first make room for God in our lives and allow the author of Life to speak to us in the quiet of our hearts.

It is from that quiet space in our heart, in union with our Creator, that change in our world begins.

Make room for God! Celebrate and Respect Life!

Fr. Mike