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## Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 30, 2015

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### Pastor's Column

Rev. Michael Ratajczak  
760-758-4100 x100  
michaelr@stmoside.org

#### Fighting Faithfully

*This Column was originally published in 2008. I thought about it as I have been listening to all those who have begun their campaigns for President of the United States.*

*It seems rather than discussing ideas and seeking solutions, there is a penchant, among a number of the candidates, to denigrate and attack the other person rather than discuss the differences regarding issues.*

*As I consider the candidates, regardless of political affiliation, the first quality that I desire in a person is a willingness to focus on the issues rather than a willingness to spend time and energy on attacking and denigrating the other person with whom he/she may disagree.*

*It is so easy to tear down and denigrate someone with whom we disagree rather than choosing the hard task of seriously discussing the differences of an issue.*

*What are you looking for in a political candidate?*

Fighting faithfully is hard. Fighting faithfully is scary. We don't have any idea how another person is going to react. And, often, though we know what we are supposed to do; we do not have any idea of how to do it.

But if we look at Jesus' ministry, if we look at the way Jesus dealt with people, we can learn how to fight faithfully.

1) Jesus shows us that the resolution of conflict is always carried out in a caring and especially loving manner—never from a vengeful posture. Expressing our feelings (even our anger) is appropriate as long as it is not done in a destructive manner. And so when we confront or ask questions, we must be careful to state our position in such a way that we do not intentionally harm the other. And if a question is harmful, if it has an edge, we need to ask to have it rephrased in a more careful way.

2) Attacking ideas is different from attacking the person and the person's motivation. Attacking an idea is not wounding. We can work to change, improve, defend, and explain an idea.

However, attacking a person or a person's motivation hurts. It ignores the issues, causes defensiveness, and only worsens the situation.

3) We watch our tongues. We do not use "always" or "never" statements. We avoid exaggeration and generalization, and are careful with the facts. Shouting is only a smoke screen to solving the issues; a smoke screen that generally suggests that one party does not really want to solve the issues or that it is time to take a break.

4) If someone says that they are hurt, we should not say, "Sorry you took it wrong. But I did not say anything wrong." Responses like that suggest that they are wrong, that they should not feel hurt, that they are too sensitive, and that I am unfeeling.

If someone says that they are hurt, we say, "Thanks for telling me and expressing your hurt. I am sorry. I did not intend to hurt you. Forgive me." Responses like these show compassion. Apologies make us a better person. People expect us to make mistakes, but they need us to own up to the mistakes we make.

There will always be conflict, disagreement of ideas and positions, and mistakes will be made. How we handle them makes all the difference!

*Fr. Mike*