

Reflections

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Bees or Beetles

Indulgence (leniency/pardon) is a virtue of great importance, but very difficult for life in community. Leniency with the faults of brothers /sisters, translates into forgiving faults, expiating them, understanding them, ignoring them. Father Kentenich, the founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, explains: “the community is not only condensed grace, it is also condensed original sin. Thus Christian reality tells us that human groups are not only a “community of saints,” but also “a community of sinners.”

And when I find out about the fault of a brother or sister, the temptation to criticize him/her right away or in an unbecoming manner (behind his/her back) is very great. It is at this time that we have to guard our tongue. If you want to examine whether you have taken love seriously among you, you can verify it with this point. And we have **the criteria** when it has to do with criticizing a brother /sister who is absent:

1. Behind his/her back, I only say that which I would also say in his/her presence.
2. Behind his/her back, I only say that which I would want said about me in a similar case.

Now, **how should I act, how should I conduct myself when I discover faults and weaknesses in my brothers / sisters?** Father Kentenich proposes two attitudes and a practical method.

Which are those two attitudes?

1. We have to consider human miseries as something evident because we are all beings laden with the rubble of original sin. We should not and we cannot ever forget this. It is natural for me to have faults. It is also natural for my brothers / sisters to also have faults. And just as I have to daily endure my own defects and limitations, in like manner I must also endure the weaknesses of others.

2. Thus being the situation of men and women, we should, in the second place, approach the brother/sister who errs with much **benevolence**. None of us is a judge, neither of the living nor the dead.

Benevolence is “a certain cover up which seems to not see certain obvious deficiencies.” It is the opposite of “that sad shrewdness which some have to see hidden defects.” Benevolence also presupposes a certain ingenuity to discover the gold in each one. And, in each one of us there are many gold bars. We only need a sense for discovering the good in the brother/sister.

Then Father Kentenich makes a comparison: we should not be like the beetle. The beetle can pass over the richest and most delicious foods, but they are of no interest. The beetle only seeks what is rotten and decomposed. We should be like the bee. She goes everywhere, but only stops at the nectar.

The practical method when I discover a defect in a brother or sister

1. I should ask myself: **do I perhaps not have the same defect?** And many times I will have to answer that I do have it. Perhaps it manifests itself in a different way. Or perhaps I do not have the same fault, but I must acknowledge that I have other faults and perhaps even greater than that of my brother/sister.

2. Secondly, instead of calling it to the attention of the brother/sister, **I should try to conquer that defect in myself.** I should strive in that area, at least for a while.

After complying with those two conditions, I can talk to my brother/sister and tell him/her my criticism. I will be able to be more objective and the way in which I call it to his/her attention will necessarily be more careful, softer and more dignified.

Questions for reflection

1. Do we have the mentality of a beetle or a bee?
2. Do I speak in the absence of others?
3. Is it easy for me to see the positive in others?

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