

August 10, 2017 - Civility and/or Respect

From time to time even people in the church get into some sort of conflict or another. It happens everywhere. I see it in the youth, youth choir, Sunday school, Women's group, men's group, college classrooms, faculty meetings, marriages, families, state legislature, the United Nations, and on and on and on. So the issue is not if or when we will run into conflict, but the real question is how we handle conflict.

In the olden days it seemed as if people used better manners and seemed to have a generosity of spirit. In previous generations it seemed as if people gave others the benefit of the doubt with regard to trust. It seemed that although we were not as diverse as we are today, people had scruples about respecting both diversity and dissent, and about solving conflict through dialogue rather than some sort of appeal to the divine command theory to which the loudest screamer might appeal. Read Jesus' words from Luke and then we can entertain a question:

"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:27-31).

In a book that sounds much like the one Stephen Carter wrote about fifteen years ago, P. M. Forni in *The Civility Solution* writes:

In today's America, incivility is on prominent display: in the schools, where bullying is pervasive; in the workplace, where an increasing number are more stressed out by co-workers than their jobs; on the roads, where road rage maims and kills; in politics, where strident intolerance takes the place of earnest dialogue; and on the Web, where many check their inhibitions at the digital door.

Conversations and discussions no longer exist. It isn't even about who is right or wrong. Both sides know they are right. It is not a question of changing anyone's mind. How can it be, when people are "YELLING" at one another with slogans and epithets on TV, in their "Status," and in their "Tweets?"

What would happen if we did "good to those who hate us/you, bless those who curse us/you, pray for those who abuse us/you? I hope we find out someday.