

Offer more love than judgement

There's an old saying that has always been a favorite of mine. It goes: "It's too bad we didn't get the other fellow's problems. We all know what he should do!"

It's true, isn't it, that we experience a sense of near infallibility about what someone else should have done or not have done. If we agree that the pope is infallible in matters of faith and morals, we mostly assume we are nearly infallible in other peoples' lives.

As a younger person I remember an older relative who ruled her home with absolute certainty and assuredness. When a granddaughter had gone to Ocean City for the summer to "find herself," this lady pontificated: "Give me five minutes with her. I'd 'find her' alright!"

In sports we call this ability to make infallible judgments about the decisions of others the "Monday Morning Quarterback" routine. We all know on Monday what the team quarterback should have done on Sunday.

Yet, life is lived on Sunday. We have to make our decisions "now," not "then." And when I look at my own life, at my amazing lack of infallibility in my own life, I'm humbled. Humility is not to be equated with humiliation, putting myself down or allowing others to put me down.

Humility is recognizing the profound truth that being "right" is not as important as being loving! When I recognize how I can make disastrous decisions in my own life, I feel more compassionate toward the decisions that others make. The famous words of Jesus are forever applicable: "Judge not, lest you be judged." The only condition that Jesus ever put on his forgiveness of us is that we had to be equally forgiving of others.

The philosopher, Leibnitz, believed that this was the best of all possible worlds. He was roundly mocked and criticized for his belief. Given all the natural and human disasters, how could this be the best of all worlds? Leibniz replied that it wasn't the best world, just the best "possible" world. Given the play between God's love, and our free will to be less than loving, this is the best world possible.

If you and I had the chance to be God for awhile, what would the world be like? I chuckle as I recall the movie, "Bruce Almighty," the story of a man who got to be God. When his girlfriend asked him to bring the full moon closer for a more romantic setting, he did. Unfortunately, this caused flooding throughout the world! When, as God, he answered everyone's prayers to win the lottery and everyone did, what happened is that, instead of one person winning millions of dollars, everyone who played got a check for fifteen cents!

There are no perfect decisions. God does not manipulate us or the universe. A sunny day for our picnic might be a disaster for the farmer's crops. Rain for the farmer might flood a city-dweller's basement! We can even find reasons to criticize God!

All of us need more love than judgment. I lost my job at the Catholic Center in 1989. I lost my radio show recently after 33 years. I've lost much of the humble amount of money I have saved. All of these "disasters" happened as a result of other's decisions, or my own decisions. Judging, blaming, and criticizing only feeds the anger. Accepting others as they are, and accepting myself as I am, are the ways of love.

God's love will help us grieve our losses, to heal from our hurts, and even to pass through death to eternal life. Being loving in all situations is not our "natural" conditioned way of thinking. But being loving toward all others and in all circumstances does heal us and heal our world. It is the way of God. That decision I do trust.