

GUIDANCE FOR DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

So often SNL members are faced with the problem of speaking to people we know who tend to reject immigrants, even though the Holy Family were once immigrants. Some people allow fear and intolerance to influence their opinion on this subject. Fr. Wayne Dziekan, Director of Secretariat for Justice and Peace at the Diocese of Gaylord, responded to an SNL member who was distressed about this issue. Here is how Fr. Wayne responded:

"In my opinion and perspective, it is impossible to "effectively counter" the hatred and rejection of the types of people you describe because their arguments and beliefs are not based on logic, nor on any knowledge of immigration law, nor on any deep familiarity with other cultures, nor on any reasonable familiarity with Catholic Social Doctrine or Catholic spirituality. How does one counter that??

I think Strangers No Longer is based on all of those things and is seeking to continue to develop ways to do what we can in the face of the ever-increasing reach of the negative perspectives you describe. In doing that, it seems to me we are best following the model of Jesus and, in fact, of the Holy Trinity.

What I mean is that God chose the particular time and place of the Incarnation to occur exactly when the Jewish people were under Roman occupation, and in a 'backwater' town to ensure the Savior would be as far away from 'fame and fortune' as possible. As in our own situation today, illogical thinking and illogical accusations were leveled against Jesus Himself. He and His followers simply went forward, continuing to work to the best of their ability to stand up for the Dignity of the Human Person and for the Glory of God. In the end, He suffered the most heinous punishment possible under the Roman Empire, crucifixion. He failed! Well, so they thought. We know better. He actually won incredibly, and most amazingly did so while remaining all-loving and forgiving, reminding his immediate followers then and us today to do the same. That's the difficult part!

Through the example of Jesus, it seems to me that it is not possible to 'conquer' what we all are seeing and experiencing, such as what you describe in your email. Perhaps it is our calling, our Christian calling, our Catholic Christian calling, to do our work, as humble as it may be, even with all that negative rallying going on around us. And mostly, to love. That may just be the toughest part of all...but in doing that, we are leaving plenty of room for the loving Hand of God to accomplish the impossible."