

Deacon's Message: "Staying in the Question"

With the wonder of Easter still very fresh and warm weather likely on the way, I find myself shaking off the sluggishness of winter and leaning into new possibilities. I'm enjoying asking more questions than arriving at definitive answers.

"Stay in the question", one of my favorite mentors always said. Hold open the possibility that there is more to learn, more to explore, more to ponder. I watched her put this to practice on many occasions in conversations with others, gently leaning in, posing questions, searching for nuance. And then she would listen – listen deeply – listen with appreciation – conveying interest and respect. As you might imagine, she, in turn, was dearly loved and respected and taught me much about keeping an open heart and open mind, especially when all around you are losing theirs!

How different her approach to human interaction is from the current rock-hard, divisive, rapid-fire manner of today's political talk in which many – ourselves included – too often leap to old assumptions, conclusions, prejudices – hardening our positions even before relevant questions are posed. Unfortunately, the Internet and social media offer far too many ways to cement uniformed positions – fake news – and spin them around the world to be digested by unsuspecting, gullible hordes.

Often a simple question is so stunning that it stops us in our tracks and forces us to think in new ways. An eight-year old girl in my Sunday School class years ago asked such a question. We were following a rather uninspired Bible study curriculum with which I was struggling to keep their attention. Suddenly, little Mindy abruptly raised her hand, stood up and said in a frankly exasperated tone of voice, "Mrs. Edmundson, Where were all the women?"

Where were all the women? The ultimate feminist question! How that simple question opens up to the possibility of seeing the history of the world and understanding its meaning in entirely new ways. All of us who have been teachers know that in creating inclusive curricula – studies that embrace the totality of humankind – it's not enough to just add readings on women, Blacks, Latinos and stir. It is in posing and exploring new questions that our minds and souls are moved to greater understanding.

Jesus was a questioner. In the relatively brief words of the Bible, he posed no fewer than 173 questions – many very puzzling and provocative. Here are four of them:

John 18:34 "Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?"

Luke 21:38 "Why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your minds?"

Mark 7:18 "Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean?"

Matthew "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to this life?"

So, go this month in peace and wonderment. Stay "in the question". Stay open, listening deeply, gaining wisdom, and receiving grace.

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