

6th Sunday of Easter (C)
May 9, 2010

Have we ever found ourselves being so competitive that we simply must win each and every argument, discussion, or decision?

One morning, little Billy woke up and proceeded to head to the kitchen for breakfast. His mom and dad were already there...dad was at the table reading the morning paper and enjoying a cup of coffee while mom was working tirelessly preparing breakfast.

Mom looked especially tired and worn out...and rightly so. After all, she was taking classes at the local college to earn her bachelor's degree, doing homework for her classes, working 40 hours a week, and doing a few chores around the house such as preparing meals and cleaning. She was reasonably exhausted.

Nonetheless, there she was, making breakfast for Billy and his dad.

While Billy got a bowl of cereal and some toast, his dad received a plate of eggs, sausage, and extremely burned biscuits.

Billy was anxiously waiting to see how his dad would respond.

His eyes were wide open and watching every move his dad made.

To Billy's surprise, his dad reached for the biscuits, smiled at his mom and asked Billy if he was ready for school.

Billy was stunned and didn't know what to say as he carefully watched his dad smear butter and jelly on the burned biscuits and ate every bite.

When Billy finished his breakfast, he got up from the table and proceeded to get ready for school. As he did so, he heard his mom say to his dad, "I'm sorry about the biscuits. I must have let them in the oven too long."

And to Billy's surprise once again, he heard his dad respond, "That's alright, honey; I love burned biscuits."

Billy thought about that comment all day long and as his dad was tucking him in for the night he couldn't help it anymore and asked, "Daddy, do you really like burned biscuits?"

"Son," his dad responded, "your mom works hard all week long with school, work, and chores around the house. She doesn't have to do these things, but she chooses to...for you and me. That's one of the reasons why I love her so much. And besides, burned biscuits never hurt anyone."

Billy's dad could have easily told his wife when she apologized for the biscuits, "Well, if you were paying more attention, they wouldn't have gotten burned!"

But rather than berating her, he chose to be compassionate and simply not get into an argument about them.

Husbands, I'm sure I don't have to tell you, but, if you want a peaceful and loving relationship with your wife, avoid the arguments and simply tell her you love burned biscuits from time to time. I'm sure she'll appreciate the little gesture of humility.

Now, wouldn't it be nice if every discussion or conversation could be solved this easily?

Unfortunately, this isn't the case.

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, there's a discussion about how Gentiles – non-baptized people – should be received into the Church.

Some people argued that circumcision was the only way to enter the Church and thus be saved.

Of course, this caused a great uproar and as a result, Paul and Barnabas, and some of the others, went up to Jerusalem to seek an answer from the Apostles.

In doing so, the very first council of the Church was convened.

Councils of the Church – such as Nicaea, Trent, and Vatican II – are designed to find a resolution, based on faith and Revelation, to a specific issue or problem at hand.

For instance, the Council of Nicaea combated Arianism and reinforced that Jesus was and is fully human and fully God and we profess this every Sunday when we pray the Creed.

The Council of Trent contested Protestantism and Martin Luther and helped reform and improve some practices in the Church such as the celebration of the Sacraments.

The Council of Vatican II influenced the Church to become a little more contemporary rather than strictly traditional.

And this very first Council with Paul, Barnabas, and the Apostles helped clarify what one must do in order to enter the Church.

As was the case with most of the Councils, there was discussion followed by some “give and take.”

It was determined that for a Gentile to enter the Church that he need not be circumcised nor follow the strict dietary laws of the Jews. Rather, he should “abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage.”

But, most importantly, what's left out of this reading is that he should hear the Word that is Jesus and believe.

With this resolution reached, some people – specifically strict Jews – had to be willing to give a little and thus, allow for some wiggle room in order for Gentiles to enter the Church.

However, in their giving, we notice that the most significant aspect of being a Christian was not lost, namely believing in Jesus as the Christ and Messiah.

Some things are non-negotiable.

The challenge, of course, is determining what things are and what things are not.

And the tool that God gives us to figure this out is none other than the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit will “teach us everything and remind us of all that Jesus told us.”

And so, the messages for us today are (1) to trust in the Holy Spirit for guidance, (2) to hear and believe in the Word that is Jesus speaking to each of us individually, and (3) to be willing to allow for some “give and take” from time to time in order to live in the peace of Christ.