



TASTE Reflection Questions #16

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How to Respond as a Catholic to Uncivil Discourse

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1. What did Susan say that most caught your attention?
2. What are some of the factors that have led to a decrease in civil discourse and behavior?
3. What were some suggestions that Susan made to help you in emotionally charged or difficult conversations? Consider also the suggestions on page 2. Explain two strategies and how you might use them.
4. Which of the following scriptures is most meaningful to you? Please explain.
Psalm 39:1 I said, "I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I will put a muzzle on my mouth while in the presence of the wicked."
Proverbs 12:18 The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
Proverbs 18: 21 The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.
Proverbs 28:23 Whoever rebukes a person will in the end gain favor rather than one who has a flattering tongue.

How Should We Interact with the Uncivil?

Adapted from an article by Amy K. Hall (standtoreason.org)

Is there a way to connect with those who have been so thoroughly steeped in the incivility present in our culture? Should we? Is there a way for us to actively improve the state of discourse today? Our understanding of Jesus needs to direct our answers to these questions. Consider the following:

Confidence. The more we understand the value of God's truth, the less riled up you'll get when someone challenges you with insults. The less riled up you are, the more logical and gracious you'll be. Building up confidence requires intellectual honesty (to admit where your knowledge is lacking) and study.

A commitment to dignity. Refuse to treat anyone with anything less than human dignity. I don't just mean don't mock him to his face; I mean don't mock him in front of your friends. Don't mock him, period. Weep for him. Pray for him. But do not mock.

Trust in God's sovereignty. When you can't get an opponent to move beyond his taunts into a substantive conversation—i.e., when the option to be rational is removed from you—you will be tempted to respond in kind out of desperation. But I promise you, just as the opponent's insults are not remotely convincing to you, yours won't be convincing to him. And worse, you'll appear hypocritical, misrepresent Christ, and render your witness ineffective. So how can you avoid that desperation? Remember that God is in charge of everything, including each person's salvation. It's right that you should care to the point of distress about the opponent seeing the truth and coming to know Jesus, but remember that it's up to God when and if a person's eyes are opened, not you. Represent Christ as accurately and graciously as you can, for as long as the opportunity is open to you, and then leave the burden of that person's soul with God. Trust Him.

Prayer. Matthew 5:44 says "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Additionally, James 5:16 teaches, "The fervent prayer of a righteous person is very powerful." Therefore, strive to develop a habit of praying for people who behave uncivilly when you encounter them.

Reject pride. You can't care about what others think of you. Hurt pride will tempt you to lash out at others when they insult you. To avoid this, let go of the need to defend your name. There's only one Name we need to promote, and the way to promote it is to reveal Him to others by responding as He did: "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly...." (1 Peter 2:23).

Where does this self-sacrificial humility, concerned prayerfulness, trust and rest in God, gracious kindness, and confident strength come from? These things pour out of a soul that's been transformed by Christ. Seek always to grow closer to Jesus so that you may show Jesus to others in your discourse.

