

Glimpse

Judgements

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In public-speaking settings, including homilies, readings, informational presentations, it often happens that speakers keep talking with congestion or phlegm in their throats. They do not seem to notice even if their gurglings sound like they are about to drown. People in the listening audience clear their throats instinctively thinking it is their throat, so you can hear many "hahums" and other sounds inviting the presenter to cough it up. Those things which make us uncomfortable, we would like to change. If your tie is crooked others who notice it, would like to rearrange your appearance. We love order, if that order is defined by our tastes.

I live with other men whose sense of orderliness is quite different from mine, but it is their space and they seem to live with it, though I personally don't know how they do it. There is my expert sense of judgment in action. They would feel constrained by my sense of orderliness, cleanliness and appearance. So who's to say what's proper and right? Well I am and I do often enough.

In our Jesuit Community there is a specific person assigned to take care of the belongings of a member who dies. The room of the deceased is locked until this assigned person enters and begins setting aside family-items, personal-items, professional items and junk-items. Recently this person went into his close friend's room for a personal chat and upon looking around mentioned that he dearly wished his friend would not die soon saying, "I am too busy to have to clean this place up." Why cannot other people be like me? Would we like others more and judge them less if they were more in accordance with our prescriptions. Well, most other are exactly like me in this manner; they do judge others as I do.

I believe that the areas of myself that cause me the most sense of insecurity are those areas in others about which I am more likely to be severe in my viewing and judging. Now there is no way we cannot observe what we encounter. Judging is what we are good at by having senses and an intellect. Judging is different from

our being judgmental. Judging is observing and living with how we experience the person or thing judged. Judgmental is how we do not live peacefully with the person and behaviors of the other until and unless they change according to our rules or requirements. We assume we know why the other person does this or that and it is based on why we would do such and such things ourselves. When my room appears tornadic, it is perhaps because I have experienced some laziness lately. Your room is messy, because you are lazy and I dislike my laziness and so dislike yours. My harshness toward you and your behavior is a reflection about my own. Concentrating on yours, takes away my judging of myself and that is easier to face.

Another thing which is embarrassingly interesting is when my reaction to the actions of one person is critical and the same action done by a second person might elicit a response to the person rather than the action. If I know you better, I will judge your behavior as better. It is the old thing about how suspicion and prejudice needing distance. "Pre-judging" or prejudice is a form of ignorance. We react to actions; we respond to persons. The closer we get to the persons of the actions, the more we respond and the less we react.

We believe that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. There is the cute kind of religious song about how God is watching us from a distance. No! God does not watch our actions and react judgmentally. God's love labors within and around us to bring us closer to the real person we are. God's love is not a reaction. It is a presence inviting us to be present to our person and our truth. It is only a glimpse, so clean up your act and actions, or else!