

Counselor's Corner

Inspiration from "Setting the Table"

In the article, "Setting the Table," the author tells a story of a woman who had invited ladies to a church discussion group. She set the stage by replacing the usual paper cups and plates with her own china. As a result of welcoming her guests in this manner and continuing the practice, her group increased in size. Everyone wanted to be present for a weekly group that made them feel special.

Although this woman is not Catholic, the writer of the article is a priest. He feels that her welcoming spirit was the foundation for her success, much like the welcoming spirit is the foundation necessary for all churches to thrive. Our foundation requires acknowledging the importance of everyone's part in the welcoming process. He says that people who come to worship have views already colored by experiences with others connected to the church. Priests, secretaries, teachers, maintenance staff members, ushers, leaders of organizations, and all who choose to worship together play important parts. If the encounters are positive between these people and extend outward, people will feel respected and welcomed, and a very strong bond will form.

It made me think that our own families are communities that can reap the rewards of a welcoming spirit. Sometimes, we are so focused on what lies before us that we mention chores that need to be done (or were left undone) before we even say hello to family members who walk thru the door. This is not intentional, but it is a bad habit that needs to be broken. Every time a parent, child, or sibling does something good, a thank-you is in order. It is a validation, and we all need that. If we truly want to make our own family members love our home and feel welcome and comfortable, we must concentrate on finding the good in each other and not hesitant to compliment. When fundamental, positive, communication techniques are present, we have "set our own tables". We have a better chance to stay together and to communicate during stressful times.

Many things are out of our control, but "setting our table" is not. Like the leader of the discussion group, we will (more often than not) find that the preparation, welcoming, and practice will be worth our efforts.

Diane L. Rivard