



FATHER ANTON'S WORDS OF WISDOM: Haven't we all experienced times in our lives when we're taken aback and almost lose our breath? A few years ago, I used to let things get under my skin a lot more than I do today. I think with each year we become more and more aware that some things just aren't worth stressing over. When things happen that are out of your control, you simply learn to let go, and "let God."

I have been a pastor now for 31 years and I have worked with many people. I have met those you can warm up to right away, some who choose to keep their distance, others who are "needy" and are always looking for affirmation, and many who are just happy no matter what. The common element here is that all seek to be loved and that is what I try to do. I'm not talking about mushy love here, there are times, when just like everyone else, I too, will avoid someone because I just don't have the energy for whatever the complaint is. Eventually, I find once someone has calmed down and you are able to speak rather than to be on the defensive all the time, things finally work out.

Now before anyone starts to ask, what's Father talking about? Is he talking about me? Relax! I'm not talking about any one individual, but am sharing with you the practical side of ministry. I often will say to someone jokingly when they are complaining about how hard it is to work with so many different people "Welcome to my world!"

Jesus had a calming effect on the people of his day. Those who were outcast, depressed, in need of love and affirmation - they were the ones closest to his heart. But there were also times when in his frustration he would speak clearly "How long must I endure you," he said when His apostles didn't even try to understand his message because they still had their own agenda. He chastised the Pharisees because they made faith a burden rather than freeing. He condemned

the Pharisees for making the lives of Gods people miserable - with rules and regulations -and quick condemnations - how could people experience God's love.

If you've been following the news, there's no lack of stories of people whose lives are broken, or who are struggling, yet rather than seek out ways to help, the media is quick to make stories so big, that whether they are true or not, lives can be destroyed. Isn't it interesting how we can build each other up and support one another for years and years, and when one mistake is made, or someone falls, we are so eager to throw stones. Remember the story of Jesus with the woman caught in adultery? "Let you who have no sin throw the first stone" he challenged the people. All went home.

There are times when I need to pinch myself to see if what around me is real; yet in the midst of it all I can honestly say life is good. Once in while there's a bit of 'manure' that gets thrown around, and life may seem to "stink" a bit, but my grandmother taught me when I was young, "Manure helps the flowers to grow." In other words our earthy challenges are opportunities for growth. If we learn from mistakes, they cease to exist because they have become lessons. So, for the most part I don't let things get me down... I take some time for introspection, to sit back and look at the whole picture and then probably come to the same conclusion I always do: "You can't please everyone, so stop trying." Easier said than done, but with age it becomes a bit easier as the years go by. So, that's my philosophy in a nutshell. Why do I put up with things? - Because I love what I do, and I love each and every person I am called to minister to. Sure there may be days I don't like someone for a few minutes, but I never stop loving. So, no matter what be assured of my love - because I know I am assured of yours.

Want to know how to deal with situations when they arise? Here's a Story that should help:

There is a story of two identical twins. One was the eternal optimist and the other the eternal pessimist. The parents didn't quite know how to deal with them, so they took them to see a psychiatrist who decided he needed to observe their behaviour. He placed the twins in separate rooms and gave each a gift to open.

The pessimist opened his gift, and it was a beautiful train set, with a shiny red engine. He tore open the box, pulled out the train and threw it on the ground. Then he had a tantrum and shouted over and over "All I get is this train set? What a piece of junk! What garbage!" and went on and on and on!

The optimist opened his gift. All that was in his box was manure! He looked and was silent for a moment... then he jumped up and threw the manure around and with a smile on his face said "You can't fool me! If there's this much manure there's got to be a pony somewhere!"

Which are you? Pessimist or Optimist?

Let us pray:

Loving God, sometimes life just doesn't go the way I'd like, and it catches me off guard. When situations arrive that overwhelm me, help me to step back to see the whole picture. I will realize that in the grand scheme of things whatever it is will only be a "blip" through the course of my journey. All I need is your love and your grace to keep me grounded, then like Jesus I can bear all, and move on. Amen.