

# Being Imperfect Together – 06-11-15

## Disagreement, Respect, and Our Political Differences, Part 1

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It's no news flash that political divisions in our country have reached a toxic level. Stories about gridlock in Congress, ugly protests, and far too much name-calling have filled the media. Many people simply tune out the harsh rhetoric, choosing instead to "live in the bubble" of their particular political affiliation (or lack thereof). Many people report a sense of hopelessness about the whole system, feeling it to be broken beyond repair.

A degree of this division shows up here at Sts. Clare and Francis, too. We tend to skew heavily in one direction in our political orientation, similar to the city and county where we live, and many of us can make the easy mistake of assuming that the other person with whom we are speaking or having dinner thinks the way we do.

That assumption, like so many others in life, often proves incorrect.

Without really meaning to, we may fall into the mistake of inadvertently offending our fellow community member with an idle comment about a news item or pressing issue. This is especially true when we label, judge, or name-call "those people" from the other side.

The answer lies not in avoiding all disagreement. Healthy families, groups, and communities know and practice the ideal of disagreement as a means to foster deeper understanding and airing of differences, with an intention of coming to a reasonable and respectful position rooted in acceptance of difference as part of the diversity of life.

Disagreement does not have to mean disrespect, disregard, or animosity; it can, in fact, open us to broader perspectives and fuller appreciation for nuance and heretofore-unrealized viewpoints. It can (and does) contribute to better problem-solving and more optimal solutions.

Perhaps a larger part of the "answer" is in the practice of respect. But what does that mean?

We'll look at that next time.

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