

Grace Notes in Miniature

Thursday, June 25th, 2020

Dear friends,

Last evening, I logged into the chat for a course –

The Human Animal – which Adriana Rerecich and I are taking with the McGrath Institute at the University of Notre Dame. We had the choice of two chat groups and luckily this was the first. Both Adriana and I found ourselves very quickly overwhelmed by other participants throwing around of very complicated-sounding references to documents we'd never heard of. Every time either of us tried to interject something, we felt as if we were being shot down. As I had joined the chat late due to another commitment, I decided to stay for the second chat and, what a breath of fresh air! It



started with two of us – both women – and the whole tone of the chat was different. I convinced Adriana to come back and the three of us had a great hour with the tutor, feeling that we were heard, that we honoured each other's contributions. Even the response of the tutor to us was different. Did I

mention that the first group was overwhelmingly male? Adriana and I later discussed the difference between the two sessions, the sense of competition that we felt in the first and of cooperation and shared learning in the second.

This reminded me of a course I had taken on Ethics and Morals many years ago in which we compared the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, considered foundational in the study of moral development, to that of Carol Gilligan, author of "In a Different Voice". Kohlberg initially suggested that women were less morally developed because of their responses on his scale. His theory recognised rationality, duty, impartiality, and universally accepted abstract principles of justice. Gilligan's model is based upon 'female' characteristics of care and relationship. More than fifty years later, we may have come to recognise that there are elements of both in most people, regardless of gender, and that there can be applications where both are needed.

The same may be said of leadership: there are times when very directive leadership is



required and others which welcome a collaborative approach. There are also times when following clear, established guidelines is necessary, and others where creativity is the gift most welcomed. That we are created in our Creator God's image and likeness accepts that we, also, are called to be creative; that God has given us an appreciation for beauty – and given us lots of it to appreciate <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDa-Mab4SoU> – invites us to participate in its production. Think of how boring life would be without sunsets and landscapes, the arts in which our fellow humans participate.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVQFEgT7E6c>

And joy has many ways of being expressed:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mXPoRnY3r10>

I also think of joy, and laughter, and humour – all also gifts from God. In Ecclesiastes 3, we are taught that there is a time to laugh and a time to dance; many of the Psalms call us to sing out with joy, and to delight in the Lord. If we really believe that bit about being created in God's image, we need to accept that

God first had those attributes. And I believe that God understands humour – the positive kind where we laugh with others and not at them. Where we take delight in the pleasure and enjoyment of others and not in their discomfiture or embarrassment. It's part of the loving relationship we have – the kind that allows for playful teasing.

Many of us find that humour at the expense of others embarrasses us, and I'd like to believe that this reflects the way God is helping us to be formed. We, in turn, share this openness to be compassionate and considerate to others in our humour with our students and our own children; 'jokes' which were based on stereotypes of other cultures and groups of people are no longer considered funny by most. God's purpose that we love one another is being worked out.... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liuxet4pJ-c>

With every blessing,

Gillian