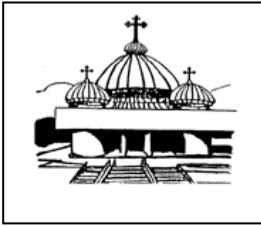


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St. Mary's Church Bulletin



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Pastor: Fr. Petro (Peter) Bodnar

DIVINE LITURGY:

SUNDAY: 9:00 a.m. (Ukrainian) **SUNDAY** 10:30 a.m. (English)

Confession: Before Divine Liturgies 9:00 am and 10:30 am on Sundays or anytime upon request.

Baptisms & Marriages: By prior arrangement (at least 1 year before the marriage date), through the parish office.

Visitations & Anointing of the Sick: Please notify the office if a member of your family is in need of a visit.

January 31, 2021
Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Prayer Intentions Jan. 31 – February 7

Saturday: 4:00 pm + Ilene & Paul Ryhaluk

Sunday: 9:00 am For Parishioners

10:30 am +Olivia Kukurudz (1st anniv) - family

Tuesday 4:30 p.m. Encounter of Our Lord – Blessing of candles.

Saturday: 4:00 p.m. + Annie Onufryk – Roze Tonnos

Sunday: 9:00 a.m. For Parishioners

10:30 a.m. +Edward Lukie – by Eleanor Stasiuk

The writers of both the Old and New Testaments have stressed the great power, both for good and for harm, of the spoken word.

St. Paul emphasized the importance of virtuous speech in the life of the Christian community when he encouraged members to pay close attention to how they spoke to one another: “Let

no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up” (Ephesians 4:29).

Especially with our loved ones, it’s all too easy to become careless in the way we speak to one another. Criticism, gossip, biting humor, and complaining can really injure our relationships—in our families and in our parishes and on the job. Once we become aware of these negative patterns of communication, we can learn to replace them with more positive ones. Let’s examine a few ways in which our speech “may give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29).

Compliments Are Always Welcome!

“Wow, honey, I really appreciate the time you take to fix such a nice dinner every day.”

“I can tell you really worked hard to clean your room, Bobby.”

“Gee, Dad, our vacation was really fun this year. Thanks for taking us.”

All of us like to feel appreciated. It lifts our spirits to know that we are valued and that our talents and efforts have been noticed. On the other hand, we are hurt or angered when we are criticized, especially when that criticism is delivered harshly. Yet often we go about our day paying little attention to the good deeds and actions of our family members, but finding plenty of opportunities to remind them of their faults and failures.

Once I recognized how good it made me feel to be complimented and appreciated, I embarked on my own campaign to express my appreciation to others. It takes a little practice. I often have to force myself not to become so caught up in my own agenda that I become insensitive to others. But I’ve found that whenever I express a word of thanks, that person is blessed. Husbands and wives can truly bless each other and their marriage by following this simple advice.

It’s also important to let our kids know that they are in our good graces. Although we need to discipline our children, constant criticism won’t help them meet the goals we set for them.

Instead, they are more likely to give up, thinking they can never please us.

Look for opportunities to express your favor to your kids. Tell them often that you love them and are pleased with them. Let them know that you enjoy being with them: “I’m glad you came to the store with me. We really had a good time together.” Look for opportunities to compliment a job well done: “Thanks for doing such a great job cleaning the garage.” And be sure to offer words of encouragement when they are struggling or lacking in confidence.

The Laugh Is on You

“Mary’s about as graceful as a bull in a china shop.”

“Bill, you eat so much you ought to use your tool chest as a lunch box.”

Have you ever been the object of these kinds of comments? This type of joking is funny and painful at the same time, with the humor gained at someone else's expense.

Negative humor often takes a jab at someone's mistakes, weaknesses, or eccentricities. Often it may be intended to be affectionate and familiar, a way of kidding someone with tongue in cheek or even of giving a backhanded compliment.

Nonetheless, negative humor can be very hurtful. It is frequently infected with jealousy, competitiveness, or one-upmanship. And, what appears on the surface as being harmless and playful jesting can lead to insecurity in our relationships. Being criticized or "put down" under the cloak of a joke eventually makes us feel unsure of ourselves and what others think of us.

Sometimes the message being communicated is one that really shouldn't be sent at all. However, sometimes the message is worth sending, but should be "packaged" in a better way. If the negative joke was intended as a humorous way of actually correcting someone, speak directly and straightforwardly about the issue. Disparaging remarks, even made in jest, are better left unsaid.

Replace Complaining with Gratitude

"I'm so busy."

"It's so hot outside!"

"Do you really want me to go there?"

It's so easy to slip into a habit of complaining! We may feel like we are simply commenting upon a difficult situation. However, chronic complaining is dangerous. It can erode our relationship with the Lord, rob us of joy, and poison our relationships with one another. Like an infectious disease, it's also contagious: our own complaining often causes others to do the same.

Once on a long road trip with my sister and her young children, the kids began to grow restless, hot, and bored. Every few minutes there was another complaint. Soon they were picking on one another and grumbling. My sister gently corrected her children several times. Finally, she told her young son, "Stop whining! Try to be joyful in the Lord." Quickly this little one replied, "But, Mom, I'm joyfully whining!"

Is there such a condition? I don't think so. But, like my inventive nephew, I often try to "redefine" my poor behavior, invent excuses for my negative attitudes, and justify myself when I'm disgruntled. This little incident caused me to take a probing look at my own life and listen to my own conversation—and made me realize that I was in danger of becoming a chronic complainer!

There's a simple remedy: expressing gratitude to God. As the missionary Amy Carmichael once wrote: "Gather up your comforts, the greatest, the smallest, and you will be surprised that you have so many to gather." When I remember to count my blessings, I'm less likely to complain about what I lack.

Turning a Deaf Ear to Gossip

"I never repeat gossip, so please listen carefully the first time."

"Gossip is like a grapefruit—in order to be really good, it has to be juicy."

"A gossip is a person who suffers from acute indiscretion."

We may laugh at these witty quips and think of gossiping as a minor fault or petty sin, but Scripture treats it seriously. St Paul included it with serious offenses: "quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder" (2 Corinthians 12:20; italics added). While gossip may not produce outright charges of wrongdoing or incompetence, it spins a web of innuendo. It diminishes the hearer's trust and esteem for the one who is the subject of the gossip.

Turn a deaf ear the next time someone starts to gossip, or gently change the conversation. And if you happen to hear an interesting "tidbit," don't pass it along. "Have you heard something? Let it die with you. Be brave, it will not make you burst!" (Sirach 19:10). Above all, resist the temptation to spread gossip or talk critically about someone in front of your own children. Not only does it give your kids a negative impression of that person, it also may lead them to think that gossiping is an acceptable practice.

A Fountain of Life

Our speech is a reflection of what lies in our hearts. If we find ourselves saying things we don't like, we may need to take a deeper look into ourselves and root out and repent of any bitterness or anger we may be harboring.

For many Christians, breaking negative habits of speech is a lifelong struggle. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of ways in which you hurt others with your speech. Then repent of them and ask the Lord for the grace to "set a guard" over your mouth (Psalm 141:3). Devise a plan to rid your family of negative patterns of speech. Hold each other accountable in this area. Spend time with Christians who have formed the habit of speaking in ways that build up their relationships.

"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life" (Proverbs 10:11). May we, through God's grace, speak in ways that bring a fountain of life to our families and our communities.

Jeanne Kun lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and is the author of numerous Bible studies and articles on the spiritual life.