

Conflict - Reconciliation?



*The goat and dogs are all about to attack each other!
What will happen next?*

From time to time we are confronted with conflict situations! What are we to do? If we fight and win, we will have power over the other. But whether we win or lose we will be hurt. How can good mutual relationships develop?

When Jesus met his opponents in situations which made him angry, he often told stories or posed questions. For example, in Mark 3:1-6 he asked if it was better to do good or harm on the Sabbath, before he 'worked' on that day of rest, healing the man with a withered hand.

In Luke 4:29-30, the people in the synagogue at Nazareth tried to throw Jesus off a cliff, but he "passed through the midst of them" - he seemed to disappear.

We may stubbornly resist those who oppose us, or prefer to slink off, a defeated party who will try to cut off this person in future. There are other possibilities. Sometimes going apart for a while helps all involved. Space allows for praying, healing and listening to God before returning and perhaps engaging in dialogue.

In Luke 6 Jesus taught the people not to judge or condemn others, but rather to forgive. Jesus pointed out how we often find it easier to see our neighbour's fault, a 'speck' in the eye, rather than our own fault, a 'log' in the eye. Can we first seek God's guidance to see our own fault, and deal with it?



The Jack Russell is not giving up quickly and continues her aggression. The goat is ready to meet the charge. The black pug doesn't feel very brave and decides to quietly retire to a safer place and ponder what to do next.



It is now the Jack Russell's turn to have second thoughts about tackling the goat, especially alone and seeing its horns close-up! What will she do? What will the goat do?

When communication breaks down and we all decide to go in different directions, no one gains a positive relationship. Can we use the space to try to see things from the

perspective of the other? Can we let them know that we have some understanding of why they are acting as they do? Then we may come to a common place together where changes can happen.

In Matthew 15:23 Jesus seemed to ignore a Canaanite woman. She was a foreigner, and he believed his ministry was only to Jews. But she persisted and succeeded in engaging Jesus in a conversation where her words showed an understanding of his male Jewish perspective. It resulted in Jesus learning from the woman, changing his mind, and healing her daughter. All benefitted.

When we can respect and care about one another, a loving releasing relationship can develop. We begin to appreciate and value others as members of God's creation and family. Can we painfully forgive, trust and share what we have with others? It is not always easy.

The risen Jesus in John 21 responded to the desertion of his disciples by deliberately meeting them on the beach and inviting them to a meal he provided. Peter, who denied Jesus, was then singled out and offered forgiveness, an opportunity to participate again in his Lord's vulnerable love and was trusted to care for others.



All the animals are slowly coming together, in a hesitant, but friendly manner. Is the pug trying a little dance of joy? Perhaps goat and dogs will soon feel free enough to begin to play together.

Sister Helen CSC October 2017

(Photos by Simone Harris)