

Lesson No. 9

Belonging and its Meaning

References :

Youth between Alienation and Belonging, H.G. Bishop Moussa

Notes for Servants :

Objectives :

General: The meaning and nature of belonging.

Specific:

1. Alienation, its reasons, forms, and cures
2. Belonging, its meaning, factors and benefits
3. The benefits of belonging.

Instructions:

1. Review last week's lesson.
2. Give a brief description about the church occasion(s) for the coming week.
3. Describe the reasons and forms of youth sense of alienation.
4. Detail the reasons and factors for the need for belonging.

Bible Verse:

ASo we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.@

(Romans 12:5)

Lesson :

Belonging and its Meaning

Alienation

Alienation is a feeling of estrangement between the person and God, the church, or the society. It is a destructive feeling that creeps into one's life due to several reasons. Among these factors is one's inability to participate in any decision making or active involvement in the surrounding which brings about a feeling of powerlessness and meaninglessness. Often the lack of stable and immutable morals and norms produces double standards which cause the youth to lose faith in any organization. When the contradiction between church morals and those of society are not reconciled in a healthy manner, social alienation occurs. Finally, the failure to use one's talents and develop one's individual personality can push the person to bitter disappointment, unhealthy isolation and seclusion. The most dangerous form of alienation is that related to God and the Church. It is enmity with God and His Kingdom and a steep slope towards the evil ruler of this world and to perdition.

Belonging

Belonging is often misperceived as a fair deal between the person and the group. In those cases, the feeling of belonging only comes if the person obtains material benefits from the

membership in the group. Contrary to this misleading view, belonging is a social, psychological and spiritual need. Before God created Eve, He caused Adam to feel a need for a companion when he saw all the animals passing in pairs, male and female, *But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him* (Genesis 2:20). This need is only satisfied by healthy interaction and love to others. Therefore, the concept of *It is more blessed to give than to receive* (Acts 20:35) takes a practical and tangible dimension in addition to its spiritual meaning. A selfish person hates everyone and is hated by all, while a giving person loves everyone and is loved by all. A person's social fulfillment strives on love, appreciation and participation. These needs are satisfied through fruitful interactions with other people while respecting their differences. One's feeling of belonging to an organization or a society is manifested in having an active and important role (reasoning, expression of opinion, decision-making, or leadership).

Circles of Belonging

Belonging takes different dimensions depending on one's capacity to love and one's dedication in service. The first circle of belonging is that to the family where self-sacrifice and love are instrumental for a strong familial bond. Next comes the belonging to the church through believing in the same creed, participating in the same worship and liturgies, partaking from the sacraments, serving in its many forms, and diverse other activities. This membership is strengthened by the need of each organ to the others in a complementary fashion. Belonging to one's country drives a person to thrive for its success and to participate in building a healthy society based on hard work, honesty, loyalty and fruitful contributions in all fields. A loving person feels a strong bond with all members of humanity in all the world regardless of race or religion. Belonging to mankind would drive some to volunteer to help the hungry, the needy, the oppressed, and all those who suffer as Saint Paul instructs *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body* (Hebrews 13:3).

Elements and Benefits of Belonging

Divine love is a crucial element in belonging since it is the bridge to others (family, congregation, society, country and humanity). It is the drive to give without expecting anything in return, to forgive and to *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep* (Romans 12:15). Education, discernment and flexibility guard the actions and guide them in the different situations. The blessings of belonging include spiritual fulfillment, psychological stability, deep satisfaction, unity with other people, and a sense of meaning, purpose, and contribution.

Conclusion:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.