

The Most Rewarding Virtue

(Mathews Barnabas Metropolitan)

Respecting others is the sign of the highest nobility. It inspires the deepest love as the craving for appreciation is the deepest craving in man. This is possible when we see others as God's Children and as fellow beings like ourselves. The spirit of respect creates infinite joy, peace and progress everywhere. Lack of respect and appreciation will cause disappointment and failure.

Again and again, St. Paul speaks about full respect, "Whatever your task, work heartily as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive inheritance as your reward" (Col. 3:23). "In humility count others as better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3). "Love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another, in showing honor," (Rom 12:10).

One another among the Hindus there is a custom of greeting bowing down clasping both hands and saying "Namasthe" (I bow to you). It is the worship of the God abiding in the other person. This act of respect should spread in all activities.

We have to respect people with less talent also, as they are God's children. It is not due to their fault that they do not have great talents. It is God given. God gives different talents so that all could work together for the common good.

We have to respect everyone, as that will make them love and respect us in return. It is our duty to honor others, as that will give them more hope and courage. On the other hand; if proper honor, is not given, people may become disappointed and they may fail.

Let us see the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He gave honor and respect to John the Baptist by receiving baptism from him. He appreciated the loyalty of His disciples saying, "You are those who have continued with me in my trials," (St. Lk. 23:20). He gave the highest possible honor to the disciples by washing their feet. He honored Peter and gave him commission to tend the lambs and sheep, after Peter's denial.

There is a story of a monastery of five members which tried to attract newcomers. Someone told the Father Superior that one of them was Christ. So they tried to find out who was Christ among them in order, so that they could respect him accordingly. They examined the virtues of everyone. But they found it difficult to find the best one. Then they decided that everyone should respect all others, as if Christ was in him in the fullness. Another thought that came to them was, that there was the possibility that each one would be Christ. Hence they decided that everyone should try to behave as Christ. Thus each one began to treat others as Christ, and to behave as Christ. The change that happened in the monastery was so remarkable that the visitors were wonderstruck and some of them joined the monastery, as the best place to lead a godly life.

Let me speak about one personal experience. When I was a student of the Osmania University, we went for plant collection in the Adilabad forest. After the plant collection, all the staff and students went into a cafeteria, on the way back. Since I was not in the habit of drinking coffee or tea, I remained in the bus. Dr. Abdul Saleem, the head of the Botany Department, finding that I was not with them and that I was not in the habit of drinking coffee or tea, bought a packet of

eatables and brought it to me. I was only a Priest. See the extraordinary respect of that professor showed to who belonged to another religion.

The question then arises, why some people refuse to respect others. May be that they think that if they respect, those who respect may be held in a low position, but the real truth is just the opposite. When we respect people and speak good things of people, then will be more inclined to respect us and speak good things about us.

Just imagine everyone trying to respect others whole heartedly. Then there will be love, joy, peace and progress everywhere. Enemies will become friends. Then this world will become a heaven. The tragedy is that even some of the educated people don't practice this. Let everyone of us make a new start in life, giving first priority to this virtue.