

Column112821

**Companions on the Journey**

**November 28, 2021**

Dear Friends in Christ,

I came across this recently and it gave me pause for thought. Just read it carefully.

***Practice the pause.  
Pause before judging.  
Pause before assuming.  
Pause before accusing.  
Pause whenever you are about to react harshly.  
Pause so you will avoid doing and saying things  
you will regret later on.***

Practice the pause. Is pausing something that is beyond your ability to do? Is pausing something that is too difficult to do for you as a person? Ask yourself this question: Why is it so imperative that you respond so quickly, so instantaneously, so immediately to a word spoken, to a situation encountered, to a word heard, to a Twitter posting or an Instagram Posting?

Why not ask the further question? The why question: Why do you think the person said that? Or did that? What might be going on in them? In their lives? In their relationships? Why must we respond right away all the time? If I don't respond right away, what will happen? Will the person "get away" with something if I don't? Am I somehow charged by God to right every wrong that I encounter, or every perceived wrong which may or may not actually be wrong?

Pause before judging. Or assuming or accusing. We, as a society, are not doing a lot of pausing right now. We are doing a lot of judging right now, a lot of finger pointing right now, a lot of condemning other people right now. We are feeling, often enough, pretty justified in the strength of our convictions and the feeling aligned with them. They may not be true at all. No. They may not be true. But of course by then it is too late.

A number of parishioners, over the years, have told me that the Word I preach in my homilies touches them, moves them, or impacts them. I am grateful to them for telling me. But I have learned some things over the years. In order to be an effective preacher of the word I must first be a listener, a hearer of the Word. I have to learn how to be a good listener. "Lord what are you trying to say to me in these Scripture readings?" Help me to convey that truth to your people. I take the time to ponder. I take the time to listen. I take the time to pause—to allow the truth to sink in and penetrate to the marrow of my bones. Only then do I begin to formulate what I am going to say.

A corollary to the above has to do with the delivery of God's word. One of the things that I had to learn how to do in my preaching was—to pause. To speak the word and then give it time to sink in, to have its affect. It took me years to learn how to be comfortable with the pause. It took me years to learn how to incorporate the pause into my preaching. But that pause is what I believe makes my word effective. Because my pause gives you time to pause too. And let it in.

And at the consecration of the Mass, at the elevation of the host and the chalice. I pause there too. To let you pause and allow what is really happening to leave its imprint upon your soul and not hurry on to whatever is next. Pausing is such a little thing. But learning how to pause in your life before you respond can make all the difference in the world. Such a little thing. Try it. You'll like it.

Peace,

Msgr. McHenry