Reputation and Rash Judgment

Issues relating to a person’s reputation fall under the Eighth Commandment. Our reputation is essentially a combination of our own choices and what others say about us. Every person has a right to a reputation that honestly reflects his or her character, especially in terms of virtue. Since virtues (and vices for that matter) come from the repeated choices we make, our character, and hence our reputation, can be formed by those same choices. However, living in the imperfect world we do, there can often be a disconnect between the reputation people have and the actual choices they’ve made.

For example, someone who makes many poor moral choices might still enjoy a good reputation and be esteemed highly either because those bad choices remain hidden or the loudest voices are only heard saying good things about him or her. Our character, and hence our reputation, might find itself in a place of “perpetual rash judgment” toward someone. A certain blindness can set in and it becomes difficult to imagine anything other than what we’ve already decided. The less we favorably are disposed to someone in the first place, the easier it becomes to fall into this sin and the more it must be guarded against.

If our rash judgment contributes to, or leads to, the harming of someone’s reputation, it becomes a very serious sin. What’s worse, sometimes those guilty of rash judgment nor seek forgiveness or atonement for them. A certain “hardening of the heart” frequently coincides with rash judgment.

What are we to do if we find ourselves susceptible to this fault (assuming we do come to see it as a fault)? The catechism includes some practical wisdom from St. Ignatius of Loyola. He reminds us that our default for any person should always be to interpret a story in a favorable way as possible — to begin by believing the best about someone, rather than the worst. And even if the worst ends up being true, to seek the person’s correction and conversion instead of their condemnation or downfall.

Ethically Speaking

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Major Religions Are More Alike Than Different

CNS/Joe Heller

Know the Truth About Refugees

For more than 30 years, Catholic Charities in the Rockford Diocese has joined other agencies in recognizing truths about refugee resettlement, educating those who are suspicious, and providing job placement training, cultural orientation and English classes to new arrivals. As our familiar calling reminds us, we do this because we are Catholic, not because they are. Around the world more than 30 million people have been forced from their home countries to find refuge elsewhere. Standing alone this would rank in the top 50 most populous countries, more than all of Scandinavia, or Australia or Chile. Refugees will have their own Olympic team at the 2020 summer games.

But the U.S. will admit only 18,000 refugees in fiscal year 2020, less than the population of Belleville or Sterling, Batavia or Huntley. Mark Grey, a professor at the Army War College, writes that “the failure of the United States to lead the world in refugee resettlement exacerbates both short- and long-term security challenges.”

Grey offers four reasons why a strong refugee program is important to our own national security:

1) we owe the thousands who personally aligned with us as translators, medics or soldiers;
2) U.S. leadership encourages other nations to resettle refugees, thereby spreading the financial cost;
3) resettlement means that refugees are less likely to return to conditions of persecution and retributive slaughter; and
4) failure to relocate refugees makes America more vulnerable to those who undermine our interests by claiming we’re unreliable allies.

Critical truths discomfort those who spread fear:

• Refugees did not want to leave their home countries. Refugees leave because of legitimate fears for life and safety due to religious or political beliefs, their race, nationality or membership in particular social groups. Question: what would it take to make you leave your home? Even the most divisive of elections have not created refugees from the United States.

• No refugees were involved in the 9/11 attacks. The 19 homicidal hijackers entered the United States on visas. Refugees come here to be safe from such terrorists, raise families, live in freedom, and become successful.

• 50% of the refugee families we resettle own their own homes within five years of arrival. Most become citizens shortly after that same first five years. More than 90% of refugees become employed within 180 days of arrival, with full-time jobs and without long-term reliance on public benefits.

• Between 2005 and 2014, resettled refugees contributed $63 billion more to federal and state government revenues than they received. Those 10 years of heightened scrutiny because of 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the great recession, saw the per capita annual net positive fiscal effect of each resettled refugee was $2,205, compared to the average of $1,848 for everyone else.

Statistics may not change people’s minds. So when in doubt, remember the Holy Family were once refugees. Please join today’s refugees on their journeys, and say, “Welcome.”

D'ESPITE THE BURGUNING NUMBERS OF DISPLACED PEOPLES, THE UNITED STATES IS ADMITTING THE FEWEST NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN THE HISTORY OF THE NATION'S REFUGEE RESSETTLEMENT PROGRAM.