


Holy Listening



Holy listening, is a gift we give another when we listen in the context of the healing presence of God. We open our heart to hear, always seeking understanding. In doing so we affirm a person's dignity and value. Their story is a sacred story. We start by creating a safe, confidential space so their story can unfold naturally, at their own pace. Holy listening allows and encourages people to relate their experiences in a supportive atmosphere that leads to comfort and healing. We respond non-judgmentally showing unconditional love for that unique individual.

Holy Listening brings one to a richer understanding of God's unconditional love for us through our acceptance of one another. It leads to a mutuality of understanding that allows the person who is ministering to another to begin to see that they are being ministered to as well. This supportive process leads to solidarity and mutuality that enriches faith and hope. The listener also becomes the learner and both journey the path together to wholeness and holiness. We are not leading or following each other, we are walking side by side. Such a mutuality of understanding creates an environment that gives a person "permission" to tell their story. Without this mutuality the person may feel too uncomfortable, too embarrassed or too stigmatized to share their story.

When someone comes to share his or her story of joy or pain it is a very intimate conversation. We should not intrude on their story except for clarifications. Gradually the trust level increases and the conversation deepens.

People come to us searching for answers. Why am I suffering? What did I do wrong? Is God punishing me? Does God listen to me? We know illness does not come from God. We know God loves each of us unconditionally. However, it takes time to come to fully understand that. Healing takes time so we do not rush. We allow the healing process to unfold.

Listening with a sense of sacredness for the person's life, makes the sharing a Holy experience, allowing for God's healing presence.

Adapted with permission from an original article by Deacon Tom Lambert