

August 2005: Teaching Tolerance

Sunday, 31 July 2005

Last Updated Friday, 04 May 2007

Newsletter Contents

- Publisher's Pen
- Empowering Parents and Teachers
- Empowering K.I.D.S. (Kids In Daily Situations)

Publisher's Pen: Teaching Tolerance

"I took upon myself a seven-year study of the world's religions.....concluded that each has limitations.....therefore, we ought to bring them all into one.....so as not to lose what is good in each, and to gain whatever is better in any one.....so that honor is rendered to God, peace to the people, and security to the empire ."

Akbar, Mogul Emperor, 1575.

Akbar was an ancient Mogul ruler who was tolerant of all religions, for he saw God in all religions and wanted the best of God, hence the best of religion for his people. Leaders of other faiths were received with reverence. Akbar knew that tolerance and brotherly love was essential to society's cohesion.

After a deep meditation on the will of God, he decided to unify the country's religious life. He took upon himself a seven-year study of the world's religions, meditating on the various aspects of their teachings, customs, ceremonies, and their effect on the life and thought of their respective followers. He concluded that all of them contained limitations, prejudice, and superstition.

His solution was to call a council of the learned of all faiths to establish a universal religion for which he sought to gain their support. He pointed out that the Hindus, Moslems, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians are all different, all think their religion best, and if an infidel does not convert, they see him/her as their enemy. During the debate, however, each leader pointed out the flaws in every religion except his own.

Akbar stood up at the end of the debate and said that since it was obvious that there were flaws in every religion, "we ought, therefore, to bring them all into one, but in such fashion that they should be both 'one' and 'all,' with the great advantage of not losing what is good in any one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In that way, honor would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the people, and security to the empire."

He had opened the door for his people, but few joined his new "monotheism." Because he practiced the best of all the religions, his nation enjoyed a peaceful existence. However, when he died, the empire declined. The Light of Akbar was no longer the light of India, for neither his sons, nor his followers, nor his people had captured the spark of God's will that burned in the heart of their leader. (excerpt from, Lords of the Seven Rays, by Mark and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Summit University Press, 1986).

How far have we come in 500 years? The progressive thinking of this ancient ruler strikes us at the core of our beliefs. Where does war stop and peace begin? It begins with teaching tolerance to our children. May we have the strength and courage to model tolerance for our children; for we teach a lesson in everything we say and everything we do (or don't do).

Smiles,

Elaine

Empowering Parents and Teachers:

Take a poll of the different religions in your classroom or neighborhood. Describe the different beliefs, ceremonies and holidays observed.

What do you see as the good parts of each?

What do you see as the limitations of each?

Have children form focus groups to discuss how children of different belief systems within your own sphere of influence have suffered, and what type of responses can be written down as a reminder to help children be tolerant of each other.

Use the following charts to help you get started. This is a survey only; it is not intended to discuss religion, but instead to discuss tolerance.

Religion
of students
Best Parts
Limitations

Situations Where Tolerance Is Needed: _____ New Response When It Happens:

Empowering K.I.D.S. (Kids In Daily Situations):

Read the story of Akbar above. What do you think would happen if we tried that today? Why? Write your response below:

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