

Faith leaders promote civility in Washington

Maureen Fiedler | May. 17, 2013 NCR Today

Well, if faith leaders can do it -- actually promote civility in Washington, D.C. -- they will have worked a miracle that rivals those recorded in the Gospels.

Apparently, some are trying. Recently, the nonpartisan Faith and Politics Institute sponsored a two-day conversation among faith groups, "Faith, Politics and Our Better Angels: A Christian Dialogue to Promote Civility."

[According to Religion News Service](#) [1], 25 religious leaders came together with the goal of promoting civil discourse. The meeting included both ends of the political/religious spectrum: Kenda Bartlett, executive director of Concerned Women for America; the Rev. Jeffery Cooper, general secretary of the African Methodist Episcopal Church; Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; Sr. Marge Clark of [NETWORK](#) [2], a Catholic social justice lobby; and others.

Also present was Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, presiding bishop of the U.S. Episcopal church. She told the media, "Faith leaders have a remarkable opportunity to shift the conversation, but it's very challenging, particularly in a larger society that wants to understand everything as a battle, as engaging the enemy, rather than with someone who might have something to teach us."

They are reportedly considering the institution of a national day of civil discourse to promote the idea and encourage preaching on the topic.

While I'm glad to see this, much more is needed. Right now, nothing of substance is getting done in Washington. There is also a stubborn inability to come together for the benefit of the American people. I can remember when conservative Ronald Reagan and liberal Tip O'Neill bridged wide gaps to reform Social Security. That day is long gone.

So words are a start. But we need to move beyond civil rhetoric to civil action and legislation.

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Links:

[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/on-faith/christian-leaders-seek-to-overcome-polarization/2013/05/15/1bfe9000-bda4-11e2-b537-ab47f0325f7c_story.html

[2] <http://www.networklobby.org>