

Building a Church of Welcome

John McCarthy | May. 23, 2013 NCR Today

The Hymn itself is not one of my favorites, but the lyrics are perfect: "Let us build a house where love can dwell, and all can safely live? Built of hope and dreams and visions, Rock of faith and vault of grace; Here the love of Christ shall end divisions." *All are Welcome* by Marty Haugen so perfectly explains our call to be a welcoming and affirming community for all.

I was so pleased to hear Pope Francis' recent homily, which said:

"The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! Father, the atheists?? Even the atheists. Everyone! And this Blood makes us children of God of the first class! We are created children in the likeness of God and the Blood of Christ has redeemed us all! And we all have a duty to do good. And this commandment for everyone to do good, I think, is a beautiful path towards peace. If we, each doing our own part, if we do good to others, if we meet there, doing good, and we go slowly, gently, little by little, we will make that culture of encounter: we need that so much. We must meet one another doing good. But I don't believe, Father, I am an atheist! But do good: we will meet one another there."

Finally. In such plain and profound words we hear the Holy Father tell us to meet people where they are on their own personal journey.

How often do we hear from people that the Church is "exclusionary"? Too often, I think. The message of Christ is not what pushes people away, but rather the people in the pews. I know that I am guilty of it at times, and I think we all are. We are in a constant fight to prove that we are "holier" than those around us, that we often lose sight of what true holiness calls us to be.

While this reflection was brief, the words of Pope Francis warrant significant consideration. What are we doing, each day, to let people know that they are welcome?

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