

Freedom from fighting

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

July Fourth is a great family time. Friends and relatives gather for picnics in the backyard or a park. Children play. Adults chat. Everyone takes a break and enjoys a warm summer day topped off with fireworks. I'm so grateful we won our independence in July rather than January. It's much more fun!

I realize July Fourth is a celebration of national independence, but isn't it a great time to celebrate freedom from family discord? If there is inharmony in the family, perhaps we can take this occasion to declare our freedom from fighting. Many families need to stop internal battles. Some family members may even need to declare their independence from abuse and oppression. Others may need to not be stubborn, to compromise for the good of the whole, just as the Founding Fathers did. Our nation needs independence from family strife. What a worthy goal for this July Fourth!

As a teenager there was often tension with my dad. One summer, we had a huge argument. It caused an open rift. When I got home, my frustration erupted. Mentally, I began rehearsing past wrongs. This only escalated the anger. Soon I couldn't think peaceably about him at all.

The last thought in my mind at that point was to pray about the situation. Fortunately, God is always speaking to us, even when we are not thinking of Him. So in the midst of this mental tirade, the quiet thought came that no one could be that bad! Was it possible that some of the disturbance was my doing? What an idea! I realized that this was God speaking to me, and that I should listen.

So I turned to God in prayer and asked for an answer on how I should handle the situation. The answer that came was most unexpected. It had nothing to do with the argument or its issues at all. Rather the thought came to see something good about my dad.

This seemed impossible. My thoughts were full of anger, bitterness, even hatred. But by this time I knew that God's thoughts are not suggestions but commands. So I turned to my divine Father-Mother again for help in finding something good about my human father. It took almost fifteen minutes, but finally I realized that he was intelligent. That was one good quality that I could agree with wholeheartedly.

The message from God was: whenever my dad came to mind don't rehearse past mistakes but think of him as intelligent. I agreed with God to do that. For the next few weeks, I only thought about how my dad expressed God's intelligence. I refused to entertain angry or hostile thoughts about him. Then another good quality occurred to me. After a few months, I was thinking of quite a few good qualities that he had.

The original argument and its issues never came up again. In fact, the entire power base of our relationship changed. To this day I'm not sure if he changed or I did. But it seemed to me that he treated me with more respect, and I had more respect for him after identifying more of his good qualities. Actually there was a total healing. We never had one argument after that. The atmosphere and relationship between us was peaceful and we became quite close. Through the power of God, two family members found freedom from fighting and gained their independence.

Now that's a reason for fireworks and celebration!

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