

Can We Get Back to Loving One Another

- Rick Scaletta, General McClane Superintendent of Schools

Leo Buscaglia (1924-1998) was the son of Italian immigrants and didn't learn English until beginning elementary school. Because of his language deficit, he was placed into special education classes. His misguided beginning in public education led him to become a special education teacher, earn his doctorate and work as a college professor. Buscaglia did not think of a teacher as 'one who teaches.' Instead he said, "No teacher has taught anything to anyone. People learn themselves. If we look at the word educator it comes from the Latin "educare" meaning to lead, to guide. That's what it means, to guide, to be enthusiastic yourself, to understand yourself and to put this stuff before others."

In 1969, following the suicide of a student, Dr. Buscaglia started to do something he had always wanted to do: teach a class on love. After having only 20 students the 1st year, the class swelled to 200 students with a waiting list of 600 each year. He wrote a series of best-selling books on love and his taped lectures were shown on PBS. Who would have thought that a person mislabeled as mentally retarded when young would make a career out of the subject of love. As our society has become more volatile and negative in recent months, in the spirit of Buscaglia, I would ask this question: "Can we just get back to loving one another?"

If there is one thing this virus has revealed, it is the Achilles heel of current American culture: the "me focus" in past decades has really weakened our willingness to put others first or even consider doing so. The proliferation of iPad, iPhone, "I- everything" has led us to only look out for #1. The issue of masking is a good example. If there is one thing I would change about the COVID-19 virus, it is this: The choice to not wear a mask would only impact the person making that choice. In that case, I'd say, do what you want. But, unfortunately, the fact is that someone carrying the virus symptomatically or asymptotically and not wearing a mask, brings greater danger to others than himself. Opponents to masking assert their "rights". Proponents of masking condemn those who do not do it. People on both sides of the masking issue can become angry and insulting to one another. So I ask, can we just get back to loving one another?

Somehow, protests over social issues have become extremely polarizing with a lack of respect and anger directed toward the opposing point of view. We used to be able to accept that there are always different points of view, but it seems now that we have to be angry toward people who don't share our views. Can we just get back to loving one another?

Tragedy in a community often brings out the best in people. I wonder if we continue down this path of severed civility and angry advocacy for our personal beliefs, if our ability to care and love will atrophy. Tragedy without caring or love for others is simply a greater tragedy.

We have young people everywhere who may feel like "the world is falling apart." Even teenagers who appear at times to not care what adults think, need us to guide and set a good moral example. They watch what adults do and what they see right now is not giving them hope.

Whatever our world view may be, it should only be expressed appropriately and respectfully. Instead of going out of our way to angrily oppose others, let's go out of our way to be kind to others. As Buscaglia says, "Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring all of which have the potential to turn a life around."

Let's get back to loving one another.