

Relationships with others



Last year two peacocks arrived unannounced in our area. They began moving around our property and those of our neighbours. At one point a peahen joined them. Then one peacock and the peahen left, leaving one peacock. He comes and goes, sometimes joined by the other peacock.

At the beginning, my two hens, Daisy, an elderly hen, and Red, were afraid of these birds, as can be seen above. The peacocks were large, and looked different. But, some time later, surprisingly, things changed.

I read recently in an article, a saying of Nelson Mandela. "If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner." (Nelson Mandela was the first Black South African President and an anti-apartheid activist.) Did the relationship that later developed between one of the peacocks and Daisy, reflect something of this quotation of Mandela?

The change in this relationship took place over some months. One day I noticed the peacocks and hens were having dust baths only 2 or 3 metres apart. Gradually they became used to seeing each other close by.

Then I saw that one peacock and Daisy, were standing and facing each other on our veranda. I took their photo and wondered what was happening in their relationship. A few days later I saw them together again. I watched, and soon realised they were interacting in a positive and interesting way.



The peacock was looking at Daisy, and then gently pecking her face, neck and the front of her body - places she could not reach to peck herself. It seemed he was removing any lice or foreign bodies hiding among her feathers. After a while, Daisy quietly walked off.

Daisy, being old, no longer lays eggs and does less walking and running around than she used to do. She would come into the category of frail elderly people who lose the ability of doing activities to serve or help others, and move from 'doing' to 'being' in their relationships. Yet, on reflecting about her changed relationship with the peacock, I believe that, like many people, her 'being' was also her 'doing'.

The relatively young peacock, less than 3 years old, was helping Daisy by getting rid of lice etc. in her feathers, and she was giving him food to eat and companionship. Their relationship had to be open and accepting of each other. It was not a dominating one by the peacock, or a fearful one for Daisy. They worked together to achieve something which benefited both of them. They were behaving more like family members and friends. Further, they were relating from different ages. What has this to say to us?

For we who are reckoned as aged, many things we could once do and enjoy are no longer physically or mentally possible for us to do. We depend more on others to help us. Changes we do not plan affect our lives. 'Doing' for us becomes less as we move into 'being'. This movement may, but we are all

different, cause us to relate more closely with God, and in God's love.

For example, we may discover that our prayer for others changes, as I mentioned in my last leaflet. I have found that instead of always praying from lists of names and events, I can sometimes just rest or relax in God's love surrounding me. I open myself for God to pray through me, and for me to pray through God, as God wills. People sometimes come into my mind and I can surround them with God's love. This prayer may reflect my ageing which causes me sometimes to want more rest and less stress in my life, but it also can develop inner resources although it may lead us to feeling isolated at times.

In prayer we might also reflect on our lives, giving thanks for so much, perhaps grieving or saying sorry to God about some past experiences. Dying can be something we may be reluctant to think about, but may need to consider. One thing we can be certain of, is that God's love will be with us, surrounding and in us when we die, and for evermore.

Changes in our relationships take time, but they can benefit and even transform us and others. Enemies can become friends, and rejected people can be experienced as mutual trusted supporters. I believe that 'being', lived out by we who are aged, also can be identified as 'doing', when it results in quietly respecting and caring for others, and deepening our relationships with them and God.

*Sister Helen CSC
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