

Where there is Competition, let me sow Cooperation

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When I was young, just beginning High School, I fell in love with the High School Band and was determined to be in it. I received a gift of money from my relatives for my Confirmation and my mom let me use it as I chose...and I chose...DRUM LESSONS!



My drum teacher taught mostly boys and he cautioned me I would have to learn to play like a boy; and so began my competitive years.

I learned that while competition can spur people to do their best and better than their best (Olympic Games), competition, when internalized, can also breed superiority or inferiority – “better than” or “not good enough.”

Later in life, I began to understand that all is a gift. I did not create my abilities or talents; they are gifts from a loving God, who as Wisdom, “permeates and penetrates all things.” We are called to be brothers and sisters – to love one another. No room for superiority – No room for inferiority. No person is “better than” or “not good enough.”

In my journey as a “percussionist,” I played with many different musical groups, and I became aware that the cooperation of each musician produced the sounds and rhythms, that played together, thrilled the hearts and souls of the listeners. We each played our instrument, read our part, followed our conductor and the

result could never have been achieved through competition alone. I remember one concert in particular, at which, there was an atmosphere of camaraderie and excitement among us, the musicians. As a percussionist aka “drummer,” my position was in the back behind the brass; the trumpets, trombones, french horns, and tuba, and when they began to play their parts, I was enveloped by the power of the music, and as I added the timpani part, I was drawn out of myself and beyond – in a different space – on the mountain top, and I thought this must be what heaven is like!

There may have been some competition when we started to rehearse but only cooperation could possibly produce such a result! An attitude of cooperation encourages each person in the group, to offer their gifts for the betterment of the whole.

Another example of cooperation in music is found in “jazz.” I imagine we’ve all listened to “jazz.” The musicians talk to each other through their instruments. It’s a conversation which goes on and winds around each other’s ideas weaving a fascinating tapestry of sound. Some people are moved to get up and dance adding their interpretation of the sound, to the overall “discussion.” I’m sure there is some competition among the musicians and dancers but all are listening to each other so that by using their gifts in cooperation all are drawn into the joy of the experience.

When Competition allows itself to be subdued in the arms of Cooperation, it will discover its gifts are a welcome contribution to the whole. And we who allow it to happen among us, bring all into the beauty and excitement of the Kingdom.