

# Along the track

## Letting Go and Beginning Again

George Bernard Shaw is reported to have said that the only person who never makes a mistake is the person who never does anything. He may well have said that but so have a lot of other people. It simply makes sense.

We all make mistakes. That's just part of life. Some of our best discoveries about life, about ourselves can come when we make a mistake, perhaps not so much about making the mistake but what we actually do with that experience. Peter asked Jesus how many times should he forgive his brother. Peter thought maybe seven times might be a fair limit. But Jesus said "seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus' answer was not about the specific number of times, but rather the very profound lesson about making mistakes and forgiveness. Mistakes are about forgiving ourselves as well as any others who may be involved. If we don't, we can create so much pain for ourselves as well as others.

So how do you speak to yourself when you make a mistake? What inner dialogue happens? Do you admit to it, to yourself and to others? Do you tend to blame others first? How do you feel? Angry with yourself, with others, demoralised, feeling a bit stupid? Growth in maturity, both physically and spiritually is a movement rather than an event. Spiritual maturity, like physical maturity doesn't come overnight. It comes in small steps. When admitting we were wrong, for example, and then letting go of those mistakes becomes more often, more frequent than these small moments connect and help us to see things differently. That's not meant as an encouragement to go out and make a whole lot of mistakes, but we all do fall down. Then we get up. That's just the nature of things. The word that is used very frequently in the Bible for sin is *hamartia*, which means missing the mark, like an archer's arrow might fall to the ground because it fell short of its target. No matter who we are, we all fall short. It is what we do about it that is important.

When we look at anything we do in life, nothing much is straightforward. We're always adjusting and saying: 'Oh that didn't work, I'd better try this' or 'whoops, maybe I didn't say that so well, maybe I need to rephrase that'. Openness to

change is so important. An attitude of letting go and beginning again generates resilience, an inner strength and courage. These qualities are built by short moments, many times. It is not about admitting defeat. Far from it. Mistake does not equal failure and falling short of the mark doesn't mean not trying again. There's a disappointment and anger inside everyone of us at times, and unless we find it in ourselves to move on, to begin again, to forgive, we feed those feelings and so we may well become bitter and ruled by stubborn resistance and petulance. Jesus spoke sometimes of people's hardness of heart and being 'stiff necked'. That sums it up pretty well!

Learning to let go and begin again is perhaps even more important in an age where we are told we can be anything we want to be. We can't. That expectation can mean that we live and act in ways to prevent mistakes —expanding our comfort zones rather than taking risks, or not thinking outside the box. Mistakes don't equal failure rather they help us to discover our limitations as well as our strengths.

Learning to begin again starts when we acknowledge our wounds, our hurts, our mistakes, our limitations and weaknesses and then we give ourselves over to forgiveness. We learn to begin again when we detach ourselves from the need to be right all the time, our determination to achieve no matter what, and to be the centre of attention. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is well named – it is an opportunity to reconcile with God and, with the gift of grace, to reconnect with God's vision for us, to put it right with each other and with ourselves.

Owning up, letting go and moving on means trusting more in the love and confidence of God and of the others around us. After all, Jesus said 'Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.' (Jn 14:27)

Do you believe him?

Regards  
**Jim Quillinan**

Email: [jquillinan@dcsi.net.au](mailto:jquillinan@dcsi.net.au)