

Moral Choices II

“Our morality actually flows from our emotional reactions”

Jesus words “why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? - You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.” Mt. 7 In the midst of a religious or political debate, how often do we put Jesus’ words into play? We find it easy to trash a person with whom we disagree, but do we have anything to learn from people who differ from us? Perhaps the certainty that “I am right” can blind us? That is what Jesus means, I believe. With that in mind I recently acquired a book called *The Righteous Mind*, with the subtitle “Why good People are Divided by Politics and Religion”. It is a book about “moral psychology,” that is how our minds work when we make moral choices. The author Jonathan Haidt, a Moral Psychologist at the University of Virginia found that our morality actually flows from our emotional reactions to situations rather than from reasoned responses. He developed stories designed to bring about a moral response. The stories were meant to evoke “taboo” responses. For example he asked about a family who ate their pet dog after it had died of natural causes. Another story involved a woman who used an American flag as a cleaning rag. A third story involved a man who had sex with a chicken, then ate it for dinner. If you are feeling that these stories are just “wrong” or that “people just don’t do those things” you are right where Haidt wants you to be.

More to come.

IHM Pray for us.

Fr. Jerry