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**ALZHEIMER'S & BRAIN awareness month**  
alzheimer's association

★ **FAITH + VALUES**

# Do you relate to others with love?

**Friar Justin Belitz**

The word "spirituality" is used a great deal these days, but do you know what it means? For me, spirituality is simply "the way that you relate."

Every day, you are relating to yourself, to others, to things, to life experience, to God, etc. My question to you is, do you realize how you relating?

Let us use an example. Jesus wanted us to relate to one another as if we were one. At the Last Supper, Jesus prayed: "Father, that they may be one as you and I are one." When speaking to the Apostles he said: "I am the vine; you are the branches." Jesus was telling us directly that we are all united and that love is the way we are meant to relate to one another.

Consider this comparison.



Friar Justin Belitz

Your body is made up of billions of cells. Each of these cells has intelligence and each is communicating with all the others constantly. They all work together to create the magnificent reality we call the human body.

Now think of the human race. We are more than 7 billion individuals. Each has intelligence, all are connected by the same life principle, and like the cells in our bodies, we are all communicating with one another by the very fact of our existence. Here, too, the ideal is that we are meant to relate with one another for the good of the whole.

The difference between cellular intelligence in our

bodies and the human intelligence in every human being is "free will." Bodily cells are very diverse. Skin cells know how to create skin, blood cells know how to create blood, etc. The basic understanding is that cells create "Unity in diversity" to create a healthy body.

The same ideal holds for human beings. "Love one another as I have loved you." "Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you." "Live in Love." When human beings relate to one another as equals for the good of the whole, we experience joy and peace in each individual as well as in the human community.

Opposite the model of equal relationships working together is the model of inequality. This model was the one used by the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago and which has influenced our

world up to the present moment. In this model, people at the top tell those down below what to do and how to act. It is a hierarchical model in which those at the top enjoy privilege and those down below do not. The implication is that those at the top know more than those at the bottom and, therefore, are entitled to carry more power and privilege. In this model, law and authority are the norm.

Now back to spirituality. How do you relate every day? Do you relate to yourself with love or are you always applying rules and regulations on yourself?

How do you relate to others? Do you extend yourself in love to everyone?

Or, do you consider yourself better than others and use judgment—and personal power—to "put others down?"

How do you relate to things? Are you happy with what you need and share your abundance joyfully with those who are less fortunate than you? Are you in charge of the things you possess or are things in charge of you? Do you think that you will be happy when you have more money, more things, more privileges, etc.?

Are you comfortable being with others who think differently than you?

If you relate with love and see others as equals, you will find joy and peace.

But if you relate only with rules, expectations, power and privilege, you will never find true joy and peace.

How would you define your spirituality?

\* Friar Justin Belitz is a member of the Order of Friars Minor and serves at The Franciscan Hermitage Inc. in the Diocese of Indianapolis.

## Place your people before your possessions

**Sister Mary Luke Jones**

At one point in her life, film star Sophia Loren was robbed of all of her jewelry. Each piece held a special memory for her—the completion of a film, a gift from her husband, a vintage bauble from family. As you might imagine, she was distraught.

In tears, she said to a friend who did not seem to understand her sadness, "Those jewels were a part of me."



Sister Mary Luke Jones

He responded, "Soft, listen to me. Never shed tears for something that cannot shed tears for you."

Our possessions are important to us and hold sentimental value, but Sophia's friend was right. Things can be replaced. People can't. A motivational speaker, Anthony D'Angelo, is credited with saying "The most impor-

tant things in life aren't things."

Here's a confession: I'm one of those sentimental people who is surrounded by "things." My office is cluttered (some would say) with pictures of family and friends, items given to me, trinkets that remind me of places and people. I like being surrounded by beautiful things but I hope I know the difference between people and things.

Frequently on TV, we watch interviews with the victims of

tornadoes or fires. And they cry. It is devastating to lose your home and your possessions.

Most often, however, they will admit to being grateful that their life, and that of their family, was spared. That's the most important thing, and in spite of their loss, they know it.

In St. Matthew's Gospel (6:19-21), we are cautioned to "not store up treasures on earth" but to "store up treasures for ourselves in heaven."

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Each and every day we enjoy a loved one is indeed a gift and even though things remind us of them, nothing can replace them.

Make sure you dust your treasures, but love your family and friends with all your heart. They are the only ones worth shedding tears for.

\* Sister Mary Luke Jones is a member of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove.

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