

After watching our new Pope Francis for the first week, I am struck by the simplicity in the approach that brings a refreshing message of gentleness, not only to a church, but to the whole world today.

Since 9/11 we have become a testosterone world, where tough talk and macho attitudes rule the day. I have commented before - with a strong rebuttal, I might add - that in many ways the terrorists have already won. The qualities that make us the great human race have been displaced with a commitment to the notion that only through tough talk and kick-your-ass attitude can we survive.

When you speak of love and kindness towards one another, you are brushed off as weak and out of touch with reality. When you speak of celebrating the diversity of the human experience, you are quickly silenced by words of entitlement and superior righteousness.

We cry with loud voices to allow guns in schools to protect our children, yet become curiously quiet when we question the content of the curriculum that would help our children become positive citizens.

We've gone from give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free to a world of if you're not among the privileged, go away.

I have long felt that the message of Jesus was not to start a new church or religion, but to show us through his words and actions what it is God expects from the human experience. When asked what the greatest commandment was, Jesus didn't have to think about it. You must love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And the second is just as important - you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Life isn't that difficult. Most people who believe in God will say that God is love. If so, then the path to getting close to God would be to behave in a loving manner. Speak with words of love, compassion and encouragement. Care about one another. Embrace the uniqueness of each individual with a loving heart.

It seems today that this attitude is seen as idealistic... weak ... totally unrealistic. How sad. How many times in history have we pursued a posture of strength through

hatred and fear, and failed? How many more times will we fail before we exhaust Gods patience?

With the attitude and approach that Pope Francis appears to be taking, I feel as if maybe God is sending the message to us once again; Ok - pay attention... look... listen ... this is what I'm looking for from all of you.

I have no crystal ball and do not pretend to have any window to what the future might bring. But I am hopeful that this message of simple love and kindness that Pope Francis seems to be bringing us takes hold. I am hopeful that each one of us can embrace this new attitude of simple love and begin to build a new world of strength through love for one another. We are truly only as strong as our weakest link, and hatred has always been our weakest link. We have a very weak chain.

We don't have to let the terrorists win. We don't have to live in this testosterone world of tough talk and kick-your-ass mentality.

We can back off of this world of hatred and stand up for the positive qualities that truly define what we are.

Maybe Pope Francis is the starting point.

I certainly hope so. I think the message is clear.

Just A Thought