

DEAR DEACON

❖ Question

Dear Deacon Jim,

I've been in the company of fellow parishioners, good people, but I get upset when I hear them "tear down" another person. Maybe it's a fellow parishioner, maybe it's a local person, maybe it's a politician or a member of the clergy. There is so much that we do not understand about other people's lives and responsibilities. Why do seemingly good people do this? They use the word HATE so easily when speaking of others whom they disagree with. Is this a sin? What is the Catholic church's position on using the word and feeling Hate towards another person? What can someone in the company of one of these individuals politely do or say to help? What would Jesus want us to do?

❖ Response

The examples mentioned happen all too frequently. Unfortunately, although not acceptable, these faults are part of our human nature. Depending on the nature of the "tearing down" of another person, it may fall under one of the *injustices of speech* considered a form of gossip. In doing so we are unjustly harming the reputation of another. The Catechism of the Catholic Church includes these under the treatment of the **8th Commandment**, *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor"*.

Regarding Hate, that term can be a rather complex one. The issue is it stems from Anger which is a regular emotion. Whereas Hate on the other hand is a strong word and can be misunderstood as Anger, jealousy, etc. Hatred is a distortion of anger and rejects reason. Hatred becomes a sin when it is coupled with actions of violence, cruelty, or brutality. Additionally, harsh speech, slander, ridicule, and the like violate the **5th Commandment** *"Thou Shall Not Kill"* because they "kill" another's character and name.

As Jesus taught in the Sermon on The Mount, *"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill, and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment"*.

Depending on the specific circumstances and person involved it would be difficult for me to respond as to how we should deal with such an individual. We could politely say who are we to judge or just simply point out the Church's teachings of Jesus.

In the case of what would Jesus want us to do, I believe HE would simply want us to *do unto others as you would have them do unto you*. Love your neighbor, such as the person being torn down which is one of the greatest commandments taught by Jesus.

Deacon Jim