

## **Relationships: Weaver like the Great Weaver**

Margaret Wheatley highlights that the scientific search for the basic building blocks of life has revealed a startling fact: there are none! The deeper physicists peer into the nature of reality, the only thing they find, is relationships. Even sub-atomic particles known as quarks, do not exist alone. One physicist has described neutrons and electrons as “a set of relationships that reach outward to other things.”

Although physicists still name them as separate, these particles aren't ever visible until they're in relationship with other particles. Everything in the Universe is composed of “bundles of potentiality” that only show their potential in relationships. Our culture largely ignores this scientific fact. We emphasise the individual and build organizations based on this false idea. Organisational charts indicate points of communication but they are as false as building blocks are to physicists. The form of organization used on our planet is the network —webs of interconnected, interdependent relationships.

This is true for human organizations and groups as well. People always reach out to those who will give them information, those who will be their allies, offer them support or cheer them up. Charts, lines and boxes might look impressive, but they are imaginary. What is real is the networks of relationships. Some people create relationships because of what they have in common (work, interests etc). Sometimes they advance the life and skills of a group or organisation more than dedicated roles or training can achieve. In those relationships, as with elementary particles, potential is revealed and new capabilities are born, not by individuals but as a result of their connections and relationships.

Leaders can ignore these networks when they reorganise. The structural change they seek, can diminish the aims and goals, if leaders are blind to these networks and their importance. Organisational issues are relational, not mechanical. Job descriptions, strategic plans, project deadlines etc are secondary to relationships. The mechanical approach does not work with humans, because humans are not machines! Humans want to be connected, to belong, to be together, to contribute to others. We see people's best in times of crisis and difficulty. Then they drop everything as unimportant except the person in need

These basic human qualities are evident whenever there is a disaster or a crisis. Official agencies and governments struggle to get their act together, while families, neighbors and strangers rush in to provide assistance and comfort. In such moments, kindness is our normal response. We reach out to find one another. The human network just happens! We have seen this often in our Passionist Family Groups. It seems strange that we are we at our best in the worst conditions, and at our worst in the best conditions?” Is this true of our Passionist Family Groups? Human kindness can only be seen and experienced in relationships. We can be human only together so we need to promote healthy relationships. Maybe a lot of the time, these relationships are too dormant. We see them at work in times of need, but why not during other times? Those in leadership need to work at promoting healthy active relationships.

The leadership role is to weave relationships. In any group ‘good relationships with one another’ and ‘the ability to contribute’ are always two of the top motivations for belonging. There are two sides to the weaver’s work. One side can be seen; the other is hidden. It is the vast hidden network that allows the other to be seen. It is necessary to take advantage of the capacities that develop from good relationships. To do this people must spend time together and be encouraged to contribute to the life of the group. Trusting relationships create effective means of support, new ideas and true joy.

Protons and neutrons are made up of quarks. Nothing smaller than quarks have been discovered and they always ‘appear’ in anti-quark pairings. These quarks reflect our experience of the close relationship between opposites and the need for both. This is most profoundly known in the experience of love that gives itself completely. Death can be the ultimate act of love and itself be the way to true life! We can’t know one experience properly without its opposite! Hot/cold; light/dark; strong/weak; joy/sorrow; death/life. This is true too of our human relationships.

Scientists have been unable to isolate quarks. At this most primitive experience of life, ‘individual’ does not survive! “We are bundles of potentiality that show ourselves in relationships”. We are like quarks. We belong to others. Our Passionist Family Groups are a way of bringing to life, ‘our bundles of potential’ We need to be attentive weavers! How can your PFG be a sign of hope and that we believe in ‘Family’?

What do you need to do to ensure there is a sense of sharing so members know one another better? What do you need to do to ensure there is a sense of ‘play’ and fun, and a break from the mentality that “we’re too busy”? How can we include those without their own family?

In Biblical times and in the Biblical culture, among other images, God was shepherd. In our times and culture with talk of networks and ‘the web’, God can also be seen as ‘the weaver’

*In the letter to the Romans, St Paul writes: “If we go through the hard times with Him, then we certainly are going to go through the good times with Him! That is why I do not think there is any comparison between the present hard times and the coming good times. The created world itself can hardly wait for what's coming next. Everything in creation is being more or less held back. God reins it in until both creation and all the creatures are ready and can be released at the same moment into the glorious times ahead. Meanwhile, the joyful anticipation deepens.*

*The difficult times of pain throughout the world are simply birth pangs. But it is not only around us; it is within us. The Spirit of God is arousing us within. We are also feeling the birth pangs. These sterile and barren bodies of ours are yearning for full deliverance. That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, do not see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy. (Romans 8: 17-26)*

The relationships we seek among people and within creation are part of the plan that God will bring together. We can see only the underlay God the weaver is working at. We have a relationship with all creation, and we need to promote awareness of the damage 'we' are doing to God's creation and our home (earth). What will it be like 'after the garden is gone'? We are called to co-operate in the weaving. Our role is to bring people into the web or the network and build relationships. Passionist Family Groups are a perfect forum for this and those in leadership can be a critical part of the weaving.

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