



## FROM OUR DIRECTOR OF FAITH FORMATION

May 21, 2023

### **Sometimes, Disagreement Runs Deeper than You Think**

Last week, I began a series on navigating differences of opinion and some of the traps that rhetoric can lay for you if you are not careful. Ultimately, my purpose for writing this is to help you in your conversations with people who disagree on matters of faith. But the principles I will be laying down have a much broader application, as I hope you will see.

The first principle: when engaging a difference of opinion (or belief), be prepared for the disagreement to run deep.

For instance, let's say you are planning a dinner party. You thought about buying steaks, but ham seemed cheaper and easier to prepare. It is possible someone disagrees with you about the cost/benefit analysis. Maybe they think the extra work and expense is worth it or it is not so difficult or expensive as you made it out to be. That kind of conversation is surface level. If they demonstrate that grilling steaks is more manageable, then you are on board.

But imagine another person has a fit that you are eating meat at all. This could be a surface level disagreement too: maybe they think meat in general is too expensive and we should go for more affordable options. But imagine you successfully address that concern (let's say the butcher down the road is donating to the cause) and they're still opposed. Finally, you find out the reason they're opposed is because they're opposed to the killing of animals. This is no longer a matter of weighing out practical considerations: getting this person to sign off on having steaks will be a much longer more involved conversation.

In debate, we call this *values clash*. You have taken a different position because you have built your case on different values. This means that resolving surface level problems will not be enough to persuade your opponent. You have to start talking about big picture questions that involve foundational principles to change their mind.

If you talk long enough with people opposed to Catholicism, you will often find a values clash lurking behind the complaints. Is hierarchy always a bad thing? Do only material things exist? Are all religions the same? Should you always be free to do whatever you want? Answer these questions in the wrong way and you will have taken a fork in the road away from Catholicism towards secular values. Follow these things to their logical conclusion, and the teachings of the Church will stop making sense to you. However, if you answer those questions correctly and hold to the values the Church does, the conclusions she reaches will be inescapable.

—Joe Moreshead