

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT PREJUDICE

The word prejudice comes directly from the Latin word *prejudicium*. It means to judge beforehand or to pre-judge. Prejudice involves making a preceding judgement or decision about a person, place, thing or situation.

Gordon Allport, a psychologist, defines prejudice as "an avertive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group simply because he/she belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have objectional qualities ascribed to that group."

Prejudice against people can be based on their sex, color, creed, race or ethnic background. Attitudes toward people in other groups usually develop during a child's earliest

years. These attitudes are developed through a series of influences and incidents controlled by the family and social group in which the child is raised.

According to psychologists, a bigoted personality can be well under way by the age of six. By the time children reach adulthood, even the well-educated find it difficult to explain why they sometimes feel antagonistic toward another group. Parents have to realize the power that their attitudes and the attitudes of the community have on the lives of their children. Parents are the ones who can do the most to rear the next generation of children freer from the hostile attitudes and prejudices toward other groups.

This can be done by:

- Understanding and admitting your own

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prejudices to yourself;

- Resolving to work toward overcoming your own prejudices;
- Considering each person as an individual as well as a member of a group;
- Respecting differences among all people;
- Stressing the things all people have in common;
- Avoiding the temptation to gossip or general-

ize from isolated incidents;

- Recognizing that there is good and bad in every group;
- Learning as much as you can about the culture and beliefs of other groups;
- Avoiding jokes and expressions that

stereotype people;

- Taking positive action when your children show early signs of prejudice;
- Using books that are free of stereotypes in language and in illustrations;
- Speaking out and acting against the evils of discrimination;
- Working toward justice in your community;
- Learning more about Catholic teachings on prejudice.



Every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, color or social conditions, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent.

Documents of Vatican II