

"Remember When Ferguson"

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Remember when Ferguson was a late night talk show host? And when Isis was an Egyptian-goddess-become-superhero along with Captain Marvel on Saturday mornings? How about when Hummus was a bean dip? (I know, I know, I just couldn't think of anything for Gaza.) The world has changed, or perhaps it is much the same, but there are serious things going on in the world today. Sometimes it's important to talk about those things, and that's probably what much of the paper is about, but I want to talk about coffee.

Coffee doesn't have lots of calories, but it does count as a food. There are different beans and roasts of the beans. I like a nice dark roast and a fresh grind that fits the way I am brewing, whether that be for dripping, pressing, or espresso. I didn't like coffee until then-Father Schumacher forced me to drink a cappuccino before going to Italy when I was 28. Now I like my coffee in many ways, although it still seems a bit wasteful to put it in cake frosting as some do.

In the office at St. Joseph's parish, we have a running battle over coffee. Some make the coffee weaker. Others like the coffee stronger. Still others want decaf or flavored. We have a rule that, whoever gets there first gets to make the coffee. As a boss, I like this rule since it gets folks to work on time. It isn't a battle over land or resources; it's good-natured fun. Coffee, in our case, is a conversation piece and a lesson in conflict resolution.

That's why I believe that God created coffee (this is the Faith Page, after all.) After all, God created everything. Even more than that, God is love and we are made in his image and likeness. We were made for love. What does coffee have to do with that? Well, when I walk into someone's house where they want me to feel welcome, they will often ask whether I would care for some coffee. But that's not all. We don't sit to drink our coffee in silence. Coffee occasions conversation.

This is part of the trouble with our world today. We look at coffee as a drug rather than a food, a fix rather than a delight. We then gulp our coffee and it doesn't bring us together except in line. Coffee shops are supposed to be places of revolution, but as we have seen lately revolution can be bloodless or bloody. So, too, the relationships we form and maintain over coffee, whether downtown or at the kitchen table, may build up or tear down.

The great conflicts of our day seem overwhelming. More things have changed than the meaning we associate with words. We may have little control over many things from behind our mug. But I am convinced that the forming and maintaining of relationships, loving and being loved, these are the stuff of world peace.