



Blessings at Work

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Andrew Harvey, author of *The Hidden Journey* (1991), had a mystical experience in the early stages of his spiritual journey. He felt his body fill with soft light, and then began to hear a voice. He knew it to be the voice of Mother Meera, his teacher. She said:

You cannot transform what you have not blessed.

You can never transform what first you have not accepted and blessed.

How many of us are trying to transform our lives, our work, and our organizations without first blessing them? What does it mean to bless something or someone?

One definition of blessing is to “make holy.” In your work, do you see yourself as holy, as connected to the Divine? Do you see God in others? Do you see some kind of higher purpose or transcendent energy working through the organization?

One of my spiritual practices is to try to see everyone, including myself, as a child of God. In my better moments, I can see that each person is on his or her own journey of faith, and that they are doing the best they can.

To bless someone, we must first suspend our negative thinking about them. This is not to condone unethical or inappropriate behavior, it is simply to avoid labeling and name-calling, even if only in our minds. The workplace can offer real challenges and opportunities to practice

this kind of non-judgement. “Judge not lest ye be judged” (Matthew 7:1). When someone does something that upsets or frustrates you, the knee-jerk response is often to judge and label that person. But what if we could take a breath and remember that this person is also a child of God. I try to remember to say to myself, “Just like me, this person has known suffering.” “Just like me, this person wants to be happy.”

When people in the Hindu tradition greet each other, they say “Namaste.” The literal meaning is “I bow to you,” and is frequently interpreted as “I honor the Divine within you.” This is a form of blessing, of recognizing the holiness of the other.

Often in the workplace, as in other parts of our lives, we wish we could change the people who appear to be preventing us from meeting our goals. If we are in a leadership role, we are expected to bring about change and transformation in individuals and in our organizational sphere of influence. The first transformation must begin within ourselves. This inner transformation requires moving from a mindset of judgment to a mindset of blessing.

As an experiment, think of one person in your workplace who is mildly annoying. Don’t begin this experiment with someone in mind who makes you really angry. Start with someone easy. See them as a child of God. Picture them as holy, as having a Divine spark within. Have compassion for whatever may be going on in his or her life that might make this person act in a way that annoys or upsets you. Then bless them. Perhaps you can say a prayer, or simply wish that person well. See what happens. That individual may or may not change, but if you change your mindset, your feelings about that person may get gentler, and that could have some surprising effects on your relationship.

Not only can we bless individuals in our workplace, we can bless the organization itself. The mood in many organizations is pretty dismal. This negativity can be contagious, and this

lack of engagement can have a negative impact on customer satisfaction, employee turnover, and other factors that can affect the bottom line.

Notice what happens the next time you hear a co-worker complain about something in the workplace. Others readily jump on the bandwagon and add their complaints, and there is a real drain in energy as people commiserate with one another. And then notice what happens if you ask a group of people to tell stories about a moment when they felt proud of working for this organization. You can sense a real shift in the energy in a very positive way. Looking for what is good about your organization, or what makes you feel proud to work there are ways to bless the organization. To ask positive questions – known as “Appreciative Inquiry” (Cooperrider and Whitney 2005) – is to look for the divine and the holy in your workplace. The more you do this, the more you bless that which you wish to transform, the more you will feel yourself transform. The more you will feel blessed.